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THE COUNTRY GENTLEMAN.

BY

“SCRUTATOR,”

AUTHOR OF

“RECOLLECTIONS OF A FOX-HUNTER,”

“THE MASTER OF THE HOUNDS,”

&c. &c.

Handwritten signature

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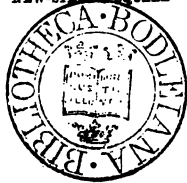
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NEW-STREET SQUARE



THE COUNTRY GENTLEMAN.

CHAPTER I.

It was a calm, serene day in the first week of August, some thirty years ago, when, seated in a large garden-chair in the pleasure-grounds of Woodborough Park, two beautiful girls were enjoying the delightful shade of a fine old cedar, by whose thick and wide-spreading branches the scorching rays of the meridian sun were excluded. It was noon; not a leaf of shrub or tree, by which this sylvan retreat was surrounded, fluttered; not a breeze stirred sufficient to agitate the stately poplars, which raised their tall, spiral heads from

the margin of a small lake, lying at a short distance beyond the garden, and on whose smooth, silvery surface not a zephyr played, with its silken wing—not even a fish rose to cause a momentary circling ripple on the glassy bosom of its glittering waters. Above, around, beneath them all nature seemed lulled to sleep, save that at intervals the hoarse cooing of the Cushat dove, echoing through the beech grove above the lake, broke in upon the stillness which reigned around.

Before these two fair daughters of Eve, who, of nearly the same age, had scarcely reached their seventeenth birthday, lay reclining on the nicely kept lawn, supporting himself carelessly on one arm, his handsome face turned towards them, — the form of a youth, who had just attained his twenty-first year.

“Well, Edmund,” said Agnes Gerard, “so you are come home for the holidays at last ; we thought you did not intend to honour us at all with your presence this autumn.”

“Vacation you ought to have said, Agnes; that is the correct term, as used by Oxford men; I am no longer a boy,” with a contemptuous cast of his upper lip.

“Then what are you, pray?” asked Agnes, unable to suppress a laugh at his ill-concealed annoyance; “are you a *hobble-de-hoy*, neither man nor boy? eh,—Edmund?” and another and louder laugh burst forth from the lips of the playful girl; on which Edmund, springing up, said, “I shall not remain here another moment, Lady Agnes Gerard, to be thus insulted;” and, with a haughty look at his fair tormentor, which excited more merriment, and a still haughtier mien, he turned abruptly away into a walk which led towards the house.

“Really, Edith,” said Agnes, “it is too absurd in that silly boy giving himself these airs. I shall not submit to such pettishness.”

“I think you provoked it, Agnes,” was the reply; “for no one likes to be laughed at, and we must not forget Edmund’s kind,

generous disposition, ever so ready to do anything he thinks will afford us pleasure."

"Papa spoils him, Edith, by too great indulgence. No one can do anything right but Edmund, in his opinion; and now you may depend I shall be lectured for hurting Mr. Edmund's feelings, merely because he chooses to be in a bad humour. He was to have taken us a drive in the pony carriage this afternoon; but now, I conclude, we must have John instead."

"Oh, no, I think not," Edith said; "Edmund will not forget his promise; and I shall tell him you did not intend seriously to offend him."

"You can do as you please, Edith; but I shall make no concession to this petulant boy, who ought to ask our pardon for leaving us in such an impertinent manner; and, as I see the gardener coming this way, I shall desire him to tell John to get ready to accompany us on horseback, in place of Master Edmund driving us; so come, Edith, and let us prepare for our excursion."

Whilst the two girls are thus occupied

in making their toilet, we will take this opportunity of relating something more of their families and themselves, with a short account of Edmund also.

Agnes Gerard was the only surviving child of the Earl of Woodborough—the child of his old age, as he had married late in life—her mother having died when she was only two years old; and it is almost unnecessary to add that, having been in consequence greatly indulged by her father from infancy up to the present time, she had now obtained complete ascendancy over him, and her will had become law to the whole household, not excepting Mrs. Errington, her highly-respected and talented governess, who had in vain attempted to curb her wayward, haughty temper when young; but her youthful charge invariably appealing to her father on any differences arising between them, he generally decided in favour of his child.

Agnes, notwithstanding, had become exceedingly attached to Mrs. Errington, who was a most kind-hearted, affectionate

person, loving her with almost parental love; and being a lady by birth and education, the widow of a naval officer, in reduced circumstances, the earl had entrusted her also with the superintendence of his domestic arrangements.

Agnes had now nearly completed her education. She was tall for her years, very graceful in her deportment, her features classically regular, with dark blue eyes and luxuriant chestnut hair, and her form beautifully defined, lacking only the development of mature growth to constitute its perfection of mould. Her mind and manners had also been formed by Mrs. Errington to comport with her high position; for, although one of that neglected, ill-paid class, a governess, Mrs. Errington was a person of superior intellect, and extremely lady-like; and being the daughter of a clergyman of old family, she had always mixed in good society. The earl had exercised great discretion in selecting such a person to fill that most important situation, all-important to the future welfare of his

only child ; and being satisfied, after a twelvemonth's probation, with Mrs. Errington's many excellent qualities, she was considered and treated on all occasions as one of the family. She was not mew'd up and confined in the school-room, like a nun in a convent, as too many unfortunate governesses are, without the opportunity of speaking to another human being, save the children under their care, or the nursery-maid. The earl possessed too much good sense and feeling not to perceive that it was necessary for his daughter's future welfare, if not with any regard for her own comfort, that Mrs. Errington should still continue to mix in the best society—to observe continually the manners and courtesies of high life, to enable her to impart what was desirable to her youthful pupil. There was consequently no dinner party, however large or aristocratic, at which Mrs. Errington was not present ; and when at first expressing her reluctance to appear on such occasions, she was courteously told by the earl that she must always consider

herself one of the family, and that so far from his desiring her to absent herself upon these occasions, he only regretted he had not greater opportunities for her to mix more frequently in society : and it must be confessed Mrs. Errington well deserved the earl's confidence, since, irrespective of her religious and moral character, she was a person who would not pass unobserved, even among the most distinguished of England's aristocratic matrons and daughters.

In addition to her annual stipend, the earl insisted on making her a handsome allowance to meet the extra expenses of dress, &c., and enable her to appear as she ought amongst his guests.

The general treatment of governesses is both unjust to them, and unjust to their youthful charges ; although I am constrained to admit, from the pushing propensity so characteristic of the present age, when so few are satisfied with their own lot in life, that a great many young women are forced by their mistaken parents into

the position of governesses, who have no pretensions to fill such responsible situations; and save from the fact of being sent to a miscalled seminary for young ladies, where they have acquired a smattering of the French, Italian, and German languages, in other respects not better as to family than upper servants; in short, I have known instances in which the children of servants have been educated for this profession, and numbers from the lower classes—daughters of small tradesmen, petty farmers, village carpenters,—are brought up to earn a wretched subsistence in this arduous calling, for which they are wholly unfitted. For admitting they possess good natural talents, and have acquired a sufficient knowledge of the general elements of education to impart instruction to others, yet from their thorough ignorance of the common customs and usages in genteel society, they are obviously incompetent to teach the daughters of gentlemen that refinement of ideas and manners, that easy gracefulness of carriage, so necessary to

shine in that sphere for which they are intended.

If, however, such persons are entrusted by parents with the governance of their children, they should at least afford them an opportunity of mixing in society, and observing themselves the manners and customs of the world, of which they must be profoundly ignorant. Unfortunately there are too many highly accomplished ladies of good birth and education, who have once moved in the best circles, reduced by adverse circumstances to seek such situations, and who are justly entitled to every attention.

Edith was the only child of Colonel Maxwell, a gentleman of old family, and good landed property, residing at Morton Grange, about three miles distant from Woodborough Park, where he had lived since the death of his father, some ten years previously, having then retired from the army, although still allowed to retain his rank. Mrs. Maxwell was his junior by some few years, yet in the prime of life,

and still handsome, lady-like, and agreeable, and fondly attached to her daughter, who had been brought up under her own careful tuition, with the assistance of masters to finish her education.

Edith, however, had not been spoiled by too much indulgence; for her father being of the *martinet* school, kept her under rather strict discipline. In stature, Edith, like her friend Agnes, exceeded the medium height of women; she was slightly although elegantly formed, with large and lustrous hazel eyes, fringed with long lashes almost sweeping her cheeks. Her features, if not so classically formed as those of Lady Agnes, possessed even greater attraction, from being illumined by the most winning, bewitching smiles, which increased the fascination of the beholder the longer he dwelt upon them; and if her eyes betrayed the gentle emotions of a heart, kind and feeling almost to a fault, her fine forehead betokened also deep intellect.

We are all sensible of the divine beauty of form; it is this which first attracts our

attention—we gaze upon and admire it as the masterpiece of creation ; but there is a far greater loveliness of mind, which lies not in the secret of outward proportions, and this beauty belonged to Edith.

The beauty of Lady Agnes, like that of a handsome gaudy picture, attracted at first sight general attention, but there was nothing beyond to engage a deeper interest. Her features, although faultless, wanted animation, and there was a half-witching, half-scornful expression about her beautiful mouth, which seemed to command rather than invite admiration. Edith differed entirely from her young companion in features, feeling, and ideas, being of most gentle and affectionate disposition, without a particle of vanity in her composition.

Of Edmund Knightley, we may briefly relate that he was the second son of an old English squire of that name, living at Wychwood Court, in the same neighbourhood, and godson of the earl, who had taken such a fancy to the boy, that he felt more

happy at Woodborough than in his father's house, where his elder brother exercised a galling dominion over him, on account of Edmund having been left a fine place and good landed property by an uncle (on the mother's side), Mr. Pemberton, who dying without children, made Edmund his heir.

The earl and Mr. Knightley being old friends as well as neighbours, had hoped that their friendship would be still further cemented by the union of their children; and the earl perceived, with great inward delight, the partiality of his godson for his daughter, which had become now too evident to be mistaken. Edmund was a fine manly youth, clever and intelligent, of high, generous feelings and steady character, and the earl loved him already as his own son; and next to Agnes, who held the supreme authority at Woodborough, Edmund's influence was recognised by the whole household, none of whom dared dispute his will, although that will was never exercised except in the most gentle manner, so that he became an especial favourite

with all. When at home (for Woodborough seemed his home) during the holidays and vacations, Master Edmund was everything with the out-door establishment. The head keeper waited in the servant's hall to know if he intended going out shooting; the groom to have his orders about the horses, the bailiff about the farm; in short, Edmund had become the earl's prime minister in all such matters, and he well deserved his godfather's confidence, possessing good sound sense and discretion. He was, moreover, a capital marksman, superior horseman, and clever at all athletic games, as well as an apt scholar. By this description we do not intend to claim for Edmund perfection of character. A young man may possess all the good qualities we have assigned to him, and yet fall far short of being a model for imitation.

The earl, as to years, now fast approaching the limits of the age allotted to man, in form and stature represented a baron of the olden time, with a frame well-proportioned, although considerably above the general

standard. In manners he was exceedingly courteous, and held in great esteem by his neighbours and friends, for his genuine kindness of heart and affability. Having since the death of the countess (to whom he had been too deeply attached to form a second marriage) given up the world with his town-house, his chief amusement was derived from agricultural pursuits; and his once expensive establishment had been reduced in order to provide more amply for his daughter, as the greater portion of his landed property went with the title to the next male heir.

St. Austin's, the place left Edmund by his uncle (now under trustees during his minority), lay about eight miles from Woodborough, and to this the earl looked forward as his daughter's future home; and a more beautiful locality could scarcely have been found. The place, as its name denotes, belonged formerly to a monastery, the ruins of which were still standing in the grounds below the present structure, which had been erected by Mr. Pemberton's

grandfather on higher ground. The house itself was a handsome edifice, sufficiently spacious for a gentleman of large property. There were two entrance halls, one on the western side, the carriage approach, and the other or inner hall (containing a fine oak staircase leading to the principal bedrooms), the door of which opened to the lawn and flower-garden. On the ground-floor were the usual apartments; saloon, drawing and dining rooms, of large and lofty dimensions, with a fine library of books. The site had been chosen with great taste, being protected on the north side by a finely timbered hill, and surrounded by the most beautiful scenery, diversified with woodlands and water—three large lakes lying in succession down the valley, by the side of which the lower drive extended nearly two miles, before reaching the lodge gates.

These fine pieces of water, covered with swans and wild fowl, abounded also in fish, and being visible from the lawn and drawing room windows, particularly attracted

the attention of visitors, with the old abbey ruins, some half mile distant, the large oriel window still standing, forming a vista through which the eye was directed to the distant heath-clad hills. Below the house, and on both sides of the lakes, lay the large deer park, studded with magnificent oak and elm trees, beneath which, clustered in irregular groups, and adding greatly to the natural picturesque beauty of the scenery, reposed the deer, flapping their ears, and tossing their still soft velvety antlers to keep off the flies during the heat of a summer's day.

No public roads or pathways passed by, or within a mile of this secluded retreat, which, embosomed amongst the hills, lay in almost silent though majestic repose—like the Happy Valley—undisturbed by the rattling of public vehicles or the noisy clamour of men. Not even the ploughboy's whistle could be heard, no arable land being visible in this lower domain. The stillness which breathed around was, however, broken in the early spring months by the hoarse voices of a large colony of rooks, and the

woods resounded with the shrill notes of the blackbird and thrush.

A rookery is generally considered as almost a necessary appendage to an old English family place;—and it was once remarked by a country squire, the view from whose house had been obstructed by a new gaudy-looking structure, built by a rich parvenu who had lately purchased a few acres of land for this purpose:—“Thank God, these fellows cannot build trees!” It is the misfortune, however, that they can *buy*, if they cannot build fine trees. Well would it be for this country, did the old Jewish law prevail here, which prevented landed property being alienated from its rightful possessor for a period exceeding fifty years, or beyond the year of jubilee, when it was obliged to be restored to him or his family. Under our one-sided jurisdiction, and that miscalled court of equity, aided and assisted by a set of voracious harpies—the just reward of whose nefarious acts and deeds would be a gallows as high as Haman’s—country gentlemen

are robbed and plundered of their old family estates, and consigned almost to beggary; and the money-made man, with his ill-gotten pelf, stalks through the halls of many an old ancestral home, where even the pictures from the walls seem to bid defiance to his insolent intrusion.

The rookery at St. Austin's extended far and wide, containing many thousand birds, whose evening flight, on their return home, darkened all beneath them when, after a few circular evolutions above the house, they descended from a rapid whirl, with compressed wings, like so many black darts sent hurtling through the air from the skies above, falling into their resting-place among the trees; and during the building season, these black barons of the wood were seen strutting about the lawn, with almost imperial dignity, like lords of the place whose authority none might dispute. In fact they had never been molested for many years, and old Mr. Pemberton left directions in his will, that they should never be ejected from their posses-

sions by gun, or any other means. To my ear the cawing of a large body of rooks,—diversified with the occasional shrill notes of the jackdaws, which attach themselves to the flock, and join in the chorus, like terriers with a pack of fox-hounds,—if not quite musical, produces a most soothing effect; and their movements during the nesting season are not only entertaining, but highly interesting. It is amusing to observe the bowing and talking of the male bird to the lady bird of his choice, equaling, in politeness of manner, that of a gentleman in a ball room on his introduction to a partner: then after this ceremony, their flying away together in search of a site for their future house—the consultation held between them, as to the eligibility of the spot—their search together after some large sticks for a foundation for their nest,—the care with which these are fitted in their proper places,—the rapidity with which smaller sticks are then added to the structure,—then the collection of roots and grass as a lining, which puts the

finishing stroke to their labour. Yet in this community of birds, private property is duly respected; since I have often noticed the purloining of sticks from their neighbour's nest, by an idle pair of young birds, immediately punished with the entire demolition of their own, by a party of some ten or twenty others, all pouncing down at once, and tearing it to pieces.

Whatever the opinion of sceptics, there must be a language among animals and birds, and an instinct separated only by a very thin partition from the reasoning faculties of man. The feelings of the dog are shown by barks and whines, expressive of joy at his master's return, with other outward signs — by growls at a stranger's intrusion; and what emotions of love or anger are shot forth from his dark hazel eyes, and expressed by that vehicle of a dog's feelings, his wagging tail! Their notice of passing events is also wonderful. I knew a dog which regularly attended church every Sunday, with a gentleman's servants. The carriage was ordered usually

every day in the week, weather permitting, for the ladies to take their accustomed drive, yet Bob never followed it; it was only on the Sabbath that he accompanied it to church, and took his seat in the servants' pew, where he conducted himself with as much propriety as many professing Christians.

Bob was a character; a strange one for a dog — possessing an idiosyncrasy of disposition like his betters. His master kept his town and country house, being as much or rather more of a citizen than a country gentleman. Bob was the same, he liked change of scene, and when tired of the country, he would set out alone upon his eight mile walk into the city, where he remained some few days, perhaps longer, as it suited his fancy, and then returned to his country house again. Master Robert, as he was called, was as well known upon the road as in the City, and when assailed by larger dogs (he was a terrier), his mode of defence consisted, not in barking and biting them through the foreleg, as other

little dogs do; but in sitting upon his haunches in a begging position, which so astonished strange dogs, that they passed him by without further interrogations. Bob possessed a meek disposition, seldom showing fight, but his greatest enemy was a large cock turkey, by whose gobbles and sharp beak he was terribly alarmed. The bird grew exceedingly red in the face on seeing Bob in his defensive attitude; he longed to put in a blow; but Bob shoved out his foot at every feint of his opponent to get in. The turkey moved round to find an opening for a dig with his beak. Bob moved too on his haunches, presenting the same unbroken front, and thus foiled the turkey, who at last retired from the ring.

From this digression on rooks and dogs, we will return to the young owner of the rookery.

CHAPTER II.

WE left Edmund in rather a pet with Lady Agnes, for calling him a *hobble-de-hoy*. Now if there is one epithet more galling to a young member of the University of Oxford, although perhaps still in his teens, it is being called a *boy*. But Edmund was more hurt than annoyed by Agnes laughing at him. It showed a recklessness, on her part, for the feelings of others, and Edith would not join in this provoking merriment at his expense. He did not regard so much the expression used by Agnes, but it was her manner and look which pained him deeply; for Edmund loved her with all the intensity of a first passion. We must call it passion, since his affection was not founded on esteem and admiration of her good quali-

ties, but on her personal charms and beauty.

On returning to the house, he, however, went directly to his own room, and having prepared himself accordingly, walked down to the stable yard with the intention of driving the pony carriage round to the hall door, which was his usual custom when taking the ladies for a little excursion of this kind. His annoyance and surprise may be imagined, therefore, when he found John, the under coachman, occupying his place in the little carriage, who informed him of the orders received from Lady Agnes. Without saying a word, Edmund turned round, and walked away from the stables towards the upper drive leading to the farm.

Lady Agnes, with Mrs. Errington and Edith, was already waiting in the hall when the carriage was brought round, and Mrs. Errington, knowing Edmund's promise to drive them, said: — "My dear Agnes, where is Edmund?"

"Indeed I don't know," she replied; "but as he is not here, I shall not wait for him."

“He engaged to be our charioteer this afternoon, my dear, and we must not be so uncourteous as to go without him; perhaps he is with the Earl.”

“No, ma’am,” replied the footman; “I saw Mr. Edmund going towards the stables, only ten minutes ago.”

“Then ask John where he is,” said Mrs. Errington.

John’s answer was, that Mr. Edmund, on finding he was ordered to attend the carriage, had left the yard without speaking a word, and had gone towards the farm.

Mrs. Errington from this reply, coupled with Edith’s look when her eye rested on her pupil’s face for an explanation, surmising the truth, prudently forbore making any remark, and the three ladies entered the carriage in silence, ominous of a disagreeable drive, which it proved to all, since in such close proximity to a servant the ladies could converse only on commonplace subjects. Lady Agnes was also in a bad humour, and vexed with herself for ridiculing Edmund, yet resolved not

to admit even to Edith that she had done wrong to him who was ever doing little acts of kindness to her. In this frame of mind everything that evening went wrong with Lady Agnes—the ponies went wrong—they took the wrong road, and in recovering the right one they nearly turned the party out. Lady Agnes could not go to Mr. Knightley's place (their intended destination) without Edmund, and she did not know where to go besides. Mrs. Errington was indifferent where they went, and Edith also.

“Then,” said Agnes in a pet, “we had better go home again.” Meanwhile Edmund had been walking very fast for so warm a day, of which he appeared to be unaware, when at a sudden turn of the road he met the earl returning from the farm.

“Why, Edmund!” he exclaimed in surprise, “where are you going in such haste? I thought you were to have taken the ladies a drive this afternoon.”

“So thought I, dear uncle,”—the familiar name by which he had addressed

the earl since childhood, — “but Lady Agnes willed otherwise by ordering John to attend her, and driving herself.”

“Some little misunderstanding between you, I fear,” remarked the Earl.

“Of no moment,” replied Edmund, “we shall be friends again at dinner-time, I hope.”

“But, my dear boy, with your usual candour, you must tell me how it originated.”

Notwithstanding his disinclination to say more, Edmund was compelled by cross-questions to state what had occurred.

“A very foolish affair altogether, dear uncle, you must admit,” when he had told the cause of their difference, “and I was particularly silly to be annoyed by Agnes laughing at me, but I did not quite like being ridiculed before Edith.”

“It was highly improper in Agnes doing so,” replied the Earl, “and I shall give her a severe reprimand for her conduct.”

“Let me entreat you, my dear lord, not to say one word to her on the subject, or

it will assuredly widen the breach between us, which may now be readily healed. A hint or even look of displeasure from you will convince her directly that I have mentioned that which I ought to have concealed."

"Well, well, Edmund—perhaps you are right—I will not allude to it at all."

During the whole evening Lady Agnes maintained her *hauteur* of manner towards Edmund, of which apparently disregardless, he directed his chief attentions to Edith, talking in his usual light, cheerful tone, as if entirely oblivious of the little *fracas* on the lawn. Agnes pouted with her pretty lip, and a quick ireful glance shot from her flashing eye, as it occasionally rested on her two young companions. Instead of sending Edmund, as she intended, to *Covenstry*, it appeared that she herself had been excluded from all conversation that evening—for, replying to her father's and Mrs. Errington's questions in monosyllables, they ceased addressing her, and she was, therefore, left to her own unpleasant

reflections, and the amusement of tormenting her pet spaniel; the evening having turned out too wet to admit of the young ladies taking their usual walk after dinner — at this season of the year the most pleasant time of the day being the evening.

The next morning little improvement was perceptible in Lady Agnes, over whose fair brow a cloud still lingered, threatening stormy weather. Edith was out of favour also for taking Edmund's part against her, although poor Edith pleaded wholly guiltless to the charge.

Soon after breakfast Captain Duncombe, eldest son of Mrs. Duncombe, a widow lady who had taken a lease of St. Austin's during Edmund's minority, rode over to speak to the earl (who was one of Edmund's trustees) about some repairs to the house, and having an eye to a little business on his own account with Lady Agnes, he had resolved to spend the greatest part of the day at Woodborough, although aware of the earl's dislike to himself.

The captain was a gay, dashing young officer, very good-looking and agreeable, now in his twenty-fifth year, but reported as going much too fast for his means, and, from his expensive habits, occasioning great anxiety to his mother, who had two other sons and two daughters to provide for. The earl, knowing his propensities, and immoral course of life, suspecting also his intentions towards his daughter, and wholly disapproving his visits, was unable, however, to prevent them, although he was never invited to dine at Woodborough. On this occasion, the captain, receiving more than usual encouragement from Lady Agnes, who considered it a good opportunity for annoying Edmund, sat chatting with her, regardless of the earl's frowns, until luncheon was announced; whilst partaking of which, as a matter of course, he suggested to Lady Agnes that a row over the lake would be a most delightful recreation on such a sultry day.

“Oh yes,” she exclaimed, catching at the idea, “it will be quite refreshing; don't

you think so, Edith?" appealing to her friend, who gave a ready assent.

"I had rather you did not go on the water this afternoon, my dear Agnes," the earl remarked; "you have a slight cold already."

"Oh, nothing at all, dear papa, and I have set my mind upon this little excursion over the lake, which we shall enjoy so much this sultry day."

"Well, my dear, if you must go, Thomas must go with you to row the boat, as Edmund has strained his wrist this morning."

To this proposition Lady Agnes perceived by her father's manner it would be useless to raise any objection, for there were some occasions on which he was very decided, and she saw by his look this was one when remonstrance would prove unavailing.

Now Thomas, the footman, was a fine athletic young man, fond of all rural games and sports, and a great favourite with Edmund, who often took him out shooting and fishing, and he was also a good oars-

man. Thomas therefore prepared with alacrity to obey the earl's orders, having a preference for out-of-door work of any kind to loitering within doors, since, there being another under him, he had little to do.

The party were soon seated in the large four-oared boat, used also for fishing; Lady Agnes and the captain occupying the stern, with Edmund and Edith further forward, nearly at the head of the boat, Thomas pulling in the centre. The lake, which lay just below the lawn, extended over some thirty acres, being very deep in the middle, but shallow all round the shore, and of an oblong shape. There was scarcely a ripple on the surface of the water, across which they were propelled by the vigorous arms of the stalwart footman, who appeared too intent on his occupation to notice very particularly the attentions and soft *sotto voce* speeches of the captain to his young mistress. Thomas, however, did notice sometimes a little heightened colour on the cheeks of Lady Agnes, and it displeased

him. Edmund, also, observing the same, sat almost silent by Edith.

They had been about an hour on the water, when Agnes desired Thomas to pull to the upper end or head of the lake, which was flanked by a small plantation of trees and evergreens, with some pretty meandering walks—just such a sylvan retreat for lovers as they would desire. Thomas, guessing how the case stood between his favourite Edmund and Lady Agnes, and that the captain might take advantage of their little difference, was considering how he might best circumvent his manœuvres, when a sudden thought struck him, on which he acted without further reflection. They were now in about six feet water, the captain lolling over the side of the boat, then going at a fair rate, when by catching a crab, as it is termed, with one oar—that is, suddenly checking the oar on one side, Thomas capsized the captain by the unexpected jerk, sending him head-long into the lake; but, contrary to his expectations, his young lady was dragged

overboard with him. Before, however, he could spring to her assistance, Edmund, forgetful of his wrist, had seized her in his arms, and was half swimming, half wading with her to the bank, the water scarcely rising up to his chin; but the captain, being a much shorter man, and unable to swim, kept bobbing up and down, screaming for help, which Thomas, thinking he had now received a pretty good ducking, at last tendered with the end of the oar. But here again Thomas reckoned without his host, for, in attempting to pull him in, he was himself capsized by the captain, the boat turning completely over, and poor Edith with a scream sent also into the water.

Thomas tore himself violently from the captain's grasp, to rescue Edith, whom he immediately caught up in his powerful arms, and while she clung round his neck in her fright, the captain held on to his jacket behind, until he found his feet on terra firma. Lady Agnes, recovered from her terror, was still standing on the bank, and could not restrain a hearty girlish laugh on beholding

the captain towed on shore in this ridiculous manner ; and the moment Edith was landed the two girls ran off as fast as their wet clothes would permit them for the house, in great merriment at the captain's expense, and rather pleased than otherwise with their adventure.

Mrs. Errington, however, seeing no fun in it, sent them both to bed, and there kept them between the blankets until the half-hour bell rang for dinner. Captain Duncombe, exceedingly disgusted with himself, for the poor figure he had made in this aquatic exploit, marched directly to the stables, and, mounting his horse, rode off home. At the dinner table, the young ladies looked much the better for their cold bath ; but the earl and Thomas looked very serious. Lady Agnes, however, having recovered her good humour, which she was now freely exhibiting at the captain's ludicrous performances in the water ; and the Earl, seeing this little incident had turned in his favour, joined also in the laugh.

CHAPTER III.

LEST it may be imagined by any romantic young reader of these pages, that, as a necessary sequel to the little incident recorded in the last chapter, Lady Agnes should become all at once desperately in love with Edmund for preserving her from drowning, or that Edith should feel impelled by similar feelings to bestow her heart's first affections on Thomas the footman, I beg to state that such was not the result of the adventure, although both the young ladies expressed themselves very grateful for the services rendered them; and Lady Agnes never after reflected on the young Oxonian for being a *hobble-de-hoy*.

The ungallant Captain, as he was henceforth denominated, fell down to zero in the

young ladies' opinion, and Agnes, who was beginning to think she was half in love with him, suddenly changed her mind, offering to hand him over to Edith, which gracious offer was politely declined by her young friend declaring her resolution not to fall in love with any gentleman just at present; for although girls of seventeen, as a general rule, consider it a reflection on their budding charms not to have one beau at least to their share, by or before that period, yet Edith had been deterred from the indulgence of such a fantasy or flight of the imagination, by her papa's denunciation of such childish follies, and pooh-poohing the idea of a girl falling in love with any man, until first approved of by her parents. From these premonitory hints, Edith, being a prudent girl, and an affectionate daughter, had not as yet allowed love to enter into her youthful calculations, although there were two young gentlemen in the neighbourhood, who apparently required only a little encouragement to throw themselves at her feet; one of these being Edmund's elder

brother, and the other the son of Mr. Shuttleworth, a retired cotton-spinner, reported to be worth two or three millions, who had, within the last three years, purchased the place and property of Mr. Egerton, a late country squire of that neighbourhood, who had been dragged down to ruin, and his property torn from him by nefarious law proceedings.

For two years the millionaire had been set at naught, or valued at his true price, by the country gentlemen, but had at last become on visiting terms with Colonel Maxwell and one or two other families, about a twelvemonth previous to the commencement of my tale. Mr. Zacharia Alphonso Augustus John Shuttleworth, the hopeful heir of the Shuttleworth family, a pink-and-white faced young gentleman, in his twenty-second year, resembling his mamma in rather a Dutch-built style of figure, after being sent at an early age to Eton, then to Oxford, and lastly on the continent to spend a year or two in travel with a private tutor, returned home, having been modelled into

something like a gentleman as to external appearance and the cut of his coat; but for all this pommelling, lecturing, and tutoring, the commonest labourer would never mistake him for a gentleman. The quiet, easy deportment of true gentility was wanting, as well as its characteristics of mind, heart, and feeling.

His first Christian name having been abbreviated when a boy by his father to Zack, was now, at his mother's desire, to give place to the second, Alphonso; and her domestics were ordered henceforth to call him by no other, on pain of instant dismissal from her service. Mr. Alphonso Shuttleworth, therefore, as we must perforce call him hereafter, having dined twice at Morton Grange, with his papa and mamma, cast a longing eye on the sylph-like form and bewitching face of the beautiful Edith. In short, he was quite enchanted by her grace and loveliness, and under some pretence or other, he had driven over there two or three times since, when, finding her at home, his passion had been fanned into

a raging flame, which pervaded his whole mind and body like a devouring element ; so that he disregarded the golden image of Mammon he had been taught to worship, setting up Edith as the idol of his heart, whom he resolved to marry if she had not a shilling in the world. He never for a moment doubted that his father's enormous wealth would immediately procure for him this coveted possession, and he had deluded himself into the belief that his handsome face (for such he thought it, and his mamma also) had already made a most forcible impression on the young lady's heart.

Alas ! for Edith ; how unconscious was she, poor girl, of raising such a storm in the breast of the young cotton-lord. But fortunately for her neither Alphonso nor his papa had yet set foot in the Hall of Woodborough, neither could old Squire Knightley be prevailed upon to leave his card at Hardington, since that place had been reft from his old friend Egerton, and transferred into the hands of Mr. Shuttle-

worth ; so that Alphonso was obliged, patiently or impatiently, to await the return of Edith to her father's house before any further progress could be made in his suit ; although the aforesaid youth made a most serious mistake in supposing himself the sort of person any young lady could fall in love with. Women do not, generally, fancy pink-cheeked young men with smooth chins like their own, and figures the shape of a bale of cotton, with long, soft, straight, light hair. They believe there is neither sentiment nor spirit in men of this description. They look too much like the dolls girls have thrown aside in the nursery ; and Alphonso might have sighed himself as thin as a thread-paper without obtaining the love of such a girl as Edith Maxwell. In fact, Alphonso's papa was a much better-looking man than his son, although not so finely polished ; possessing rather large though not coarsely vulgar features, and his eye betokening great activity of mind. He was a sharp, shrewd, intelligent man of business, and having practised some few years as a

solicitor, he was up to all the quirks and quibbles of the law.

Mr. Shuttleworth, having been employed solely by business men, that is, tradesmen, in Manchester, was thereby let into their secrets of rapid money-making by speculation, and having made two or three ventures himself in that line, which proved successful beyond his expectations, he was induced to embark more largely in such enterprises, so that in a very short time, marvellously short to the uninitiated, he was reported the richest man on 'Change. It is an old and true saying, that "money makes money," but there is another equally true in the present state of monetary transactions, that "money can be made without money," a solution of which mystery will be best explained by a term well known to business men—paper-flying, or bill discounting, cases being continually brought under public notice where tradesmen have made their thousands and tens of thousands with scarcely any capital whatever. There are facilities and accommodations afforded to men in business,

by bankers and others, on the bare security of their name only, which a gentleman of good landed property might apply for in vain, except through the usual ruinous process of lawyers, law, mortgage, &c. The most iniquitous transactions in this money-making age are almost daily exposed, and until the public safety is protected by some new parliamentary enactment, roguery will ride rampant and rough-shod through the land. Even the lowest radical papers are compelled to cry out against the wholesale adulterations of every article sold for consumption, or the use of man.

On being put in possession of Hardington, the first act of the millionaire was to pull down the old time-honoured house—whose thickly-built walls had withstood the wintry blasts for three past centuries, and would have stood unmoved for a century to come—and erect a fine Italian-looking edifice on higher ground, the front being decorated with a portico of that order of architecture called the composite—and the interior finished off in the most expensive manner.

On one side, the drawing, dining, and breakfast rooms, all connected by lofty folding doors, formed a range of apartments more than a hundred feet in length. The same floor also contained a large hall—splendid library—billiard room, with lady's boudoir, and hot and cold baths. The dome over the grand staircase was enlivened by gaudy paintings, of various devices, and a range of columns decorated the corridor leading to the bed rooms.

The offices, over which were several good bed-rooms, besides sleeping apartments for the servants, were on a corresponding scale. A large conservatory, ornamented by pilasters, and connected with the breakfast-room, extended on the south side, crowded with plants and exotics of the most rare description. The kitchen-garden contained forcing houses, pineries, &c. ; in short, the place was replete with every luxury of the nineteenth century. The drawing-room, especially, presented the appearance of a large upholsterer's show-room, being crammed with every expensive article of furniture

the genius of the upholsterer could invent. The retinue of servants corresponded with the house — the footmen of the loftiest stature to be procured — expensive articles these, which are paid for by their inches — appareled in gorgeous liveries — with carriages and horses on a par with those of any nobleman's establishment.

Mrs. Shuttleworth, as to form, bore a very striking resemblance to a turtle, being of about the same dimensions from her shoulders downwards, with a short, thick neck, on which was stuck a little, round head, with full, vermilion-coloured cheeks and light grey eyes ; as however she had supplied her husband on first starting with materials for greasing his spinning-wheels — being a tallow-chandler's only child, and possessing a large fortune — she carried matters with a very high hand over the household.

Mr. Shuttleworth, through his immense money power, had become a terror to the country squires, by purchasing every acre of land he could lay his hands upon — even

very small farms, surrounded by another gentleman's property — outbidding every one else, more for the purpose of extending his influence, than as a fair investment, since the land so purchased would not return him two per cent.; and his round, fat squab of a wife was no less an aversion to the squires' dames, by cutting them all out with her gaudy equipages.

An instance of this man's extreme assurance in such matters occurred the morning after the two young ladies' plunge in the lake, when a letter was addressed by him to the earl, proposing to purchase St. Austins for his eldest son, who, on marrying, would require some place of his own.

"Here, Edmund," said the earl, handing him the letter, "is something which concerns you more than myself — cool and impudent."

Edmund, having read the contents with a flushed face and angry brow, returned the letter in silence.

"Well, my boy," asked the earl, "what answer shall I return?"

“It requires none, in my opinion, dear uncle, and I should treat such an impertinent proposal as it deserves.”

“Then do with it as you please, my dear boy—here it is,” again placing it in his hands.

Edmund rose from the table, and going to the fire-place tore the letter to pieces, and throwing them into the grate, resumed his seat, without another remark.

The earl, regarding him with an approving smile, said, “You have acted properly, in thus treating with cool disdain the impertinent proposition of this upstart cotton-spinner, who appears to think that every feeling must be sacrificed to money. But who can the lady be, whom this mighty Alphonso delights to honour, as about to be raised to the second place in the empire? Is it you, Edith, who are to be thus distinguished?” asked the earl, with an inquiring glance.

“Indeed, no,” she replied, quickly recovering from her slight confusion, and now returning the Earl’s gaze with a steady eye.

“The Colonel patronises this Mr. Shuttleworth,” continued the Earl, “having I am told invited his family to dinner, at Morton Grange, several times, and has accepted his hospitality in return ; so it may be resolved between the high contracting powers — the papas on both sides, — to form a nearer alliance. What say you, Edith, to becoming Mrs. Alphonso Shuttleworth ?”

“Never, my lord, with my consent,” replied Edith indignantly, “his father’s treatment of poor Mr. Egerton, which Lucy told me of, I can never forget.”

“I hope,” added Edmund, “you will always adhere to that resolution, and not be persuaded by either father or mother to accept that low-minded cub, young Shuttleworth, for in that case, Edith, we should seldom meet again, since as the friend of John Egerton, I never can or will hold intercourse with one of that man’s family, who, trampling his feelings under foot, robbed him of his property and his home.”

“I am rejoiced to hear you express such warm manly feelings in defence of your ill-

used friend, my dear Edmund," said the Earl, "and I certainly think Colonel Maxwell will ere long discover his mistake, in recognising a man of such ideas and principles so entirely at variance with gentlemanlike conduct."

CHAPTER IV.

THERE is one other family of whom I must take notice in this early stage of my tale, that of Mr. Knightley. Descended from a long line of ancestors, who had possessed Wychwood Court for many generations, Mr. Knightley was now in his fiftieth year, rather tall and thin, standing about five feet eleven, and possessing a fine intelligent cast of features, little impaired by the hand of time — in appearance and manners the personification of a highly bred and highly polished English gentleman. Being endowed with great natural abilities, clever and well informed on general subjects, well versed in literature, and the laws of his country, he had been selected to fill the office of chairman at the quarter-sessions, discharging

his duties to the satisfaction of his brother magistrates, with equal courtesy and discretion. He held, in addition, another very responsible and arduous post — that of master of the fox-hounds, which had been kept in his family for more than a century.

Of Mrs. Knightley we need only say, she was a lady of very old family also, exceedingly pleasing in manners, and still retaining the elegant figure, if not the beauty, of her early life. Of their second son Edmund, we have already taken notice — of their eldest Reginald, it may be said that he inherited the good looks, without all the good qualities of his parents, being haughty and imperious in temper, and of a selfish disposition; yet possessing the polish and courteous demeanour of his father, and from his remarkably handsome features, and affability, he was quite a spoilt pet with the ladies of the county; and with his sister Emmeline, now in her nineteenth year, one of the most gentle, kind-hearted beings in existence, we will close this short sketch of the Knightley family.

At Woodborough, after the clearing up of the storm, calm weather succeeded, and Lady Agnes continued on the most friendly terms with Edmund; but she received his little attentions—presents of flowers and fruit—with a complacency which would have been destructive to the hopes of a more experienced lover. To her they had become matter of course offerings, and the smile with which they were received was considered by the young lady as a sufficient remuneration to the donor. Edmund, however, seemed to view everything connected with her conduct through a magnifying glass. The slightest tint on her cheek appeared to him a deep blush. The most trifling agitation was construed into embarrassment from another cause, and her gracious reception of his services tantamount to a reception of himself as her accredited lover; and this optical as well as mental delusion continued with Edmund, varied by occasional risings and fallings of the heart, according with the temperature of the weather, or rather the temperature

of Lady Agnes's mind, until the expiration of his vacation; when a tear standing in her eye on leave-taking sent him off in high spirits to Oxford, fully impressed with the idea that on the termination of his studies Lady Agnes would become his wife.

A fortnight after his return to Alma Mater, Edmund sent her a present of some choice and beautifully-bound books, the reception of which she acknowledged by a very affectionate letter, containing many expressions of kind feeling towards him—how dull they all were without him, &c., &c.—and concluding by subscribing herself his most affectionate friend; which Edmund, by a wide stretch of imagination, converted into so many terms of undying love.

To an under-graduate of Oxford (the term signifying a young man who has not taken his degree), who is debarred from ladies' society, the form of his loved one is cherished more fondly and continuously than it might be in the turmoil of the busy

scenes of life. A reading man, studying for his examination, is almost like a monk shut up in his cell. Early in the morning he is summoned by the tinkling of the little bell to chapel, from whence he returns to his solitary breakfast; that being despatched, his books are laid on the table, over which he continues poring the greater part of the day, varied by a lecture or two with his tutor, until the dinner hour; after which a friend or two may join him at his wine. During the spring or summer months, he takes his constitutional walk or ride in the evening, after which his studies are resumed, until a late hour at night. This is the every-day life of a reading man at college; and, as a relief from this monotonous perusal of Latin and Greek authors, we need scarcely say how refreshing and exhilarating are the contents of a letter penned by the hand of a beautiful and dearly-loved girl, the object of his first and most pure affections!

Such was the case with Edmund now, although he had previously enjoyed many

months of relaxation from deep study, when he had joined in the festivities of college life without being led into dissipation, and the too common vices indulged by non-reading men, from which highly moral and religious principles had preserved him uncontaminated; and, we may add, the love of Agnes acted also as one of the strongest repellents against any illicit desires. There are seasons of temptation, especially to the young and sanguine, when the best may be led astray, and forget their duty to their Creator; but in this hour of trial, the love of woman, if not the love of God, will save man from pollution. When oblivious or regardless of that eye which beholds the secret workings of his heart—of that omnipresent Spirit ever hovering around him, the imaginary form of a dearly-loved object stands in his path, like his guardian angel to turn him from evil. Let the worldly-wise and the libertine scoff and jeer at boys' and girls' love, if they will. Let parents preach on prudent matches, which they in their youthful days

never thought of. But, in defiance of jeers and scoffings—of ridicule and expediency—I maintain that youth's first pure love of woman has rescued, when no other power could avail, many a man's soul from perdition. To the young I say—Love, love as early as you may some dear, sweet-tempered, pure, chaste girl—love her with all your heart and mind—with one sole, undivided affection, and that love will save your soul from destruction. But above all, love the God of love ; reverence His laws and commandments, and rest assured those commandments were not written by the hand of a hard taskmaster, but dictated by a sincere love to man, by whose obedience to those precepts his truest happiness will be secured on earth, with a foreshadowing of that which awaits him in heaven.

The love of Agnes proved an additional incitement to Edmund to keep himself unspotted from that little world in which he had been now living for more than two years.

After Edmund's departure from Wood-

borough, Edith returned home, to the great joy of Alphonso, who had made almost daily inquiries of the old woman who kept the lodge gates, as to when Miss Edith might be expected.

"Lauks now," said Mrs. Kirkman, the gatekeeper, to Mrs. Green, the undergardener's wife; "there that young Hal-fonser, as they calls him, is always a-pulling up here in his fine curricule to know when Miss Edith's a-coming home. What's that to him, I should like to know?"

"A good deal, perhaps, Mrs. Kirkman; the young gentleman wants a wife, I suppose, to help spend his money for him."

"He won't get Miss Edith, though, Mary Green; she's much too good for the like of him."

"Don't make too sure of that, Mrs. Kirkman; gentlefolk be as fond of money as we poor souls, and I'd bet a new shilling-piece that if the old cotton-spinner comes down handsome, the Colonel wouldn't hang back."

"I thinks other guess, Mary; the

Colonel's too proud of his family to let Miss Edith be married to a cotton-spinner's son, howsomever rich he may be; and then, such a plain, common-looking young man as that Halfonser.— Why, Mary, you wouldn't let un change places with your John?"

"No, Mrs. Kirkman, that I wouldn't; our John's a more genteeler young man than he, for all his money; and they *do* say it warn't come by in an honest fashion like."

"Then I do say, Mary, and houlds to it, that he ain't a fit man for our sweet young missus — dear heart! so gentle and so good! There, she do come and sit in that chair for an hour at a time, axing questions, and talking just like little Betsey White, and bless her pretty face! allays a-bringing summut for I or the old man — half a pound o' tea one time — a gown at another — flannel to keep us warm in the winter — money almost every week, to get the old man some more comforts when he comes home from work; and only two days

agone, seeing our flitch o' bacon were handy gone, Farmer Tomkins, a-going to market, hollers out at the gate, 'Here, dame Kirkman,' says he, 'I got a present for ye; help to pull it out;' and down he bundles another great side o' bacon; 'tis for yerself and the ould man, to hang up in the kitchen and look at, if ye don't like to eat it.' 'Lauks, Mr. Tomkins,' says I, 'you be werry kind to us poor old folk.' "'Tain't my doing,' says he, 'and I shan't tell ye, dame, who sent it, although ye may guess. It com'd from a young lady, who see'd the flitch agin the wall were cut very short t'other day;' and, with a laugh, and whisk of his whip, Farmer Tomkins were gone. There, Mary Green, what do ye think o' that?"

"I think's a good deal on it, Mrs. Kirkman, and Miss Edith's a dear sweet young lady, and there's one young gentleman I should like to see her married to; but they say he's bespoke for her leddyship at the Park yonder."

"I know's who you do mean, Mary—

Master Edmund; ah! he's a nice young man, and the only one hereabouts likely to make a good husband; but lauks, look yonder, if there bain't that Halfonser a-driving up the road, as fast as the mail coach." And the old woman had scarcely time to put on her bonnet when "gate" was called out, and on its being opened he drove through.

The gate had not been closed a minute, before another voice was heard shouting, "Holloa! dame Kirkman, open Sesame;" and young Squire Knightley appeared on horseback.

"Who has just passed through?" he asked quickly.

"Mr. Halfonser."

"Hang his impudence!" muttered Reginald impatiently, not waiting to hear the other name; and setting spurs to his horse, he went away at full speed on the turf beside the drive, making the dry ground rattle like a board under his horse's feet.

"Oh dear! oh dear!" cried the old gate-keeper; "that young Squire Knightley 'll

be the death of Mr. Halfonser,—look! look! he's a-frightened the curricule hosses, and they be a-running away, too, over the Park. Oh! my gracious, Mary, look! look! if there bain't Halfonser sent a-spinning hup in the air like a shuttlecock; and that hard-hearted young squire a-riding on, as if nothing war the matter."

Truly enough, such was the case; for Reginald, rattling by the curricule at full speed, set off Mr. Alphonso's high-bred horses, which bolted, defying all his powers to check them; until, from a sudden jerk over a large mole-hill, he was capsized out of the vehicle; but the groom kept his seat, until the horses stopped of themselves at the second gate. Alphonso picked himself up, a great deal more frightened than hurt, having descended from his pirouette in the air, as all falling bodies do, with his heaviest part downwards, and finding no bones broken he began to be exceedingly irate with the person who had caused his overthrow.

"Who is that insolent blackguard?" he

demanded of his servant, as he came puffing and fuming from his walk up to the carriage; "who set my horses off?"

"Young Squire Knightley, Sir;" the man replied.

"He's a blackguard notwithstanding, George, and deserves a good caning for his impertinence in galloping by me in that manner."

"You'd better not call him names, Sir, or talk about caning, unless you wants to get a good horse-whipping first, and be shot arterwards. He can do both pretty well, Sir, and it doan't take much to set his young blood a-biling up."

"Well, George, turn the carriage, I shall go home."

"What for, Sir?" asked George; "you bain't damaged at all, as I can see — just a bit of dust on your back, which I'll brush off with my handkerchief."

"I feel rather sore, and out of humour, George, and had better not present myself before the ladies now."

"Dang it all, Sir, I'd go on, if I had my

arm broke, or the young squire will make a pretty joke of you before the young lady, for turning tail and running away. We shan't never hear the last on it;—face 'em out, Sir—face 'em out at once—you neddn't stop no longer than's agreeable."

Thus pressed, Alphonso felt compelled to proceed, and was soon after ushered into the drawing-room, where he found Reginald Knightley talking and laughing with Edith and Mrs. Maxwell, at what he surmised to be his mishap, as they ceased speaking on his name being announced.

Alphonso felt rather a warm sensation about his face and ears, as Reginald surveyed him with a proud, disdainful look on his approaching Edith, who was sitting with him on the sofa, evidently with the intention of offering his hand; but his heart failed him at this moment, from seeing no corresponding movement on her part, or even a smile of welcome. This increased his confusion, and he drew back with a bow; Reginald continuing his con-

versation with her, in a gay, lively tone, as before.

After sitting some ten minutes longer, Reginald rose, saying to Mrs. Maxwell, "I wish to see Edith's pony, which she tells me is pronounced incurable, and turned out to grass, if you will allow her to walk with me so far, for he will come to no one but herself?"

"Oh, certainly," was the reply; and as the young lady left the room to put on her bonnet, Reginald, politely opening the door for her, added, with a laugh, "Don't be long at your toilet, Edith — I will wait in the hall."

These words suggesting unpleasant reflections to Alphonso's mind, he proved anything but an entertaining visitor to Mrs. Maxwell, who felt relieved by his departure; soon after which Reginald again entered the drawing-room, whilst Edith ran upstairs to take off her bonnet.

"Really, my dear Mrs. Maxwell," he said, "I cannot conceive how you can patronize that cub."

“Why?” she replied; “he is very passable, although not quite so handsome or so agreeable as Reginald Knightley; but as he has now become one of us —”

“Pardon me, my dear madam, for interrupting you, but Heaven forbid he should ever become one of us, — as well might a cart-horse start for the St. Leger, as that fellow presume to rank amongst thorough-bred gentlemen.”

“Well, Reginald, he is very well in his way.”

“True, my dear madam, but *his* ways are not *our* ways; and that fellow’s groom looks more like a gentleman than his master.”

“Well, poor fellow, he cannot help his appearance; but the Colonel thought it better to be on good terms with his neighbours, and therefore called on Mr. Shuttleworth.”

At this moment the Colonel entered the room, and after the usual salutation said, “So, Reginald, you set off Mr. Shuttleworth’s horses, and upset the young gentle-

man, I hear, by riding so furiously past his curricie ?”

“I was not before aware, Sir,” replied Reginald, with a contemptuous curl of his lip, “that my pace was to be regulated by that of Mr. Alphonso Shuttleworth.”

“Oh ! certainly not, Reginald, but he is a young hand with the reins.”

“Then he should let a better man handle them. I suppose, if he comes out with the hounds, I shall be compelled to pull up that he may take his fence before me.”

“Come, come, Reginald, that is carrying matters a little too far ; but I know you have a prejudice against this young man and his father.”

“Which I feel convinced, Colonel,” with a low bow, “will never be overcome ; but the fact is, my dear Sir, I took advantage of your elastic turf to give my horse a breather before regular hunting, not expecting to knock over a cub in my gallop ; or make a *shuttlecock* out of a Shuttleworth.”

“Well, well, Reginald, you can be very

bitter sometimes, but don't be too hard on this young fellow and his father."

"I shall be as hard upon them, Colonel, as they have been on my friend Egerton, and woe betide the old fox or cub if they ever cross my path; and now for my mission, which is to ask you, Mrs. Maxwell, and Edith to partake of our last haunch of venison on this day week."

"We have no engagement for that day, I believe, my dear," appealing to Mrs. Maxwell, "and therefore we shall have great pleasure in accepting your invitation."

"I am rejoiced to hear it, Colonel, as the Earl and Agnes honour us on that occasion, with a few other friends; and now, having other calls on hand, I must make my *congé* to the ladies and yourself."

Reginald Knightley, although not a marrying man, that is, not intending to enter into that state, without finding a wife with sufficient fortune to support his present style of living, resolved from that day to checkmate Mr. Alphonso's attentions to Edith, of which he had before been in-

formed, more for the purpose of keeping him at a respectful distance, than of endeavouring to engage the young lady's affections; and this he thought might be easily effected, by the friendly intercourse which had from childhood subsisted between them, without endangering her happiness or compromising his honour. Reginald liked Edith better than any girl in that neighbourhood, in fact he had a very great regard for her; and could not bear the thought of her being transplanted into a family with whom he felt it impossible to hold any intercourse. He knew also that young Shuttleworth possessed a low, mean, selfish disposition, with vulgar ideas and vulgar habits, which would render any girl of a refined mind miserable if married to him.

He did not, however, attribute to Edith such bad taste as to accept willingly such a person as Alphonso; that he believed impossible; but he feared her father's influence over her might be exerted, as the Colonel appeared evidently resolved to

patronise the young Cotton Lord — with what views he could not understand, except in reference to his daughter. Reginald therefore intended to step forward boldly, and dispute every inch of ground with his detested rival, and determined if necessary to explain his motives to Edith.

CHAPTER V.

CAPTAIN DUNCOMBE had become on very intimate terms with Alphonso — not on account of any similarity of ideas or tastes, but from prudential motives ; intending to draw upon the young man's purse, when an opportunity occurred for this manœuvre to be put in execution. Moreover, there was always a feast of good things at Hardington, and some rare bins of wine, with the flavour of which the Captain was so exceedingly pleased, that he patronised the cotton spinner and his family circle very frequently, where, truth to speak, he received a cordial welcome. Mrs. Shuttleworth was as much taken with his gay, sprightly humour, and as much amused by his stories (of which he possessed a great

fund), as her son and heir; and he had rendered himself so agreeable, that the lady of the mansion told him "he would always find his knife and fork ready, whenever he liked to drop in and take pot-luck."

The Captain had been taking his "pot-luck" there a few evenings after Alphonso's misadventure at Morton Grange; and when the lady had retired to her drawing-room, (the lord of the mansion being from home) Alphonso began, with their second bottle of claret, to relate his ill-treatment, so he termed it, by Reginald Knightley.

"Well," remarked his friend, "there was nothing to catch hold of on that occasion; he had as much right to be galloping on the turf, as you to be driving on the carriage road."

"But I heard him laugh as my horses swerved aside, and I believe he did it on purpose, to make them run away."

"Nothing more likely; but still this is *no casus belli*, you can't call him out for it; but as both visit at the Grange, you can soon find an opportunity for quarreling

with him ; for he is a confounded, overbearing, insolent puppy, and I will be your second, my boy, which is more than I would be for any except a very particular friend."

"Thank you, Duncombe," was the short reply, in a tone which clearly implied, "No thanks to you for the offer."

"This Reginald Knightley seems on good terms with the Maxwells," he continued after a slight pause ;—"paying his *devoirs* to the young lady, I suppose."

"I suppose not," said the Captain, "for the Colonel is a close-fisted old chap, and won't fork out very freely for his daughter during his lifetime, and Reginald knows when he is well off. He has now his five hundred a year, to find himself in clothes and horse flesh, and on marrying, the old squire may allow him a thousand more ; but this won't maintain a wife and children in the style he now lives at his father's house. You may take my word for it, then, young Knightley won't marry any girl without lots of money down, and that he won't get from the Colonel."

"She's a deuced pretty girl, that Edith Maxwell," remarked Alphonso; "don't you think so, Duncombe? quite a clipper!"

"By gad, Sir, there's no mistake about it; but pass the bottle, old fellow, you have helped yourself twice to my once, and that's not fair with such wine as this."

"Beg pardon, Duncombe, but we'll have another fresh bottle," pulling the bell, on which the butler entered with coffee.

"Take that stuff away," said Alphonso, "and bring more claret."

"Tea is ordered in the drawing-room, Sir," replied the man, "of which I was desired to inform you."

"Then the old woman may keep all the cat-lap to herself, Mr. Sharpnose; but you bring us another bottle of claret, and say we are coming when that's finished."

The butler obeyed, soon returning with the wine.

"Now, Duncombe, you shall have the first buss at it," Alphonso said, beginning to feel excited, "and I should like un-

commonly to get the first buss at that girl's lips."

"You don't say so, do you? Well, you're not perhaps singular in that wish," replied the Captain; "I should fancy it very much myself, for she is the prettiest girl I have seen yet, in the whole county, and will make a splendid woman when she comes to maturity."

"Then why don't you make up to her yourself, Duncombe?"

"I can't afford to marry, without plenty of the current coin down on the board. You can; that's just the difference between us; but with a tenth part of your governor's money, I would put in a bidding for her to-morrow."

"Well, Duncombe, I've a deuced good mind to have a shy at her myself, and I daresay our two governors could soon come to terms, if she suited me."

"Confound your impudence," thought Duncombe. But he merely said, "Oh, of course," with a sneer, which Alphonso did not observe. "But you must be quick about

it, for there is Welford of Elmhurst, with lots of tin, and that fool Addleby, of Addleby Hall, both on the look out for wives. Welford is a conceited coxcomb, and thinks no woman in the county good enough to suit his fastidious taste; but he may alter his opinion when he sees Edith Maxwell. By the way, Shuttleworth," continued the Captain, "you ought to have had your stud of hunters all in trim by this time, fit to go."

"The governor don't wish me to keep hunters, that's the truth," was the reply; "I don't intend to hunt."

"Not hunt!" exclaimed the Captain in well-feigned astonishment; "not hunt! then what the deuce are you going to do with yourself through the winter months? Going to Margate or Ramsgate, I conclude. —You can't live in London this time of year, and if you go to Leamington, Cheltenham, or even to Brighton, you will be expected to hunt there, or be set down as a regular spoony. Here, you *must* hunt — every man in the county does, down to the

chimney-sweep on his jackass — go to bed and to sleep like a dormouse for the winter if you like — shut yourself up in the library as a book-worm ; but for a young fellow like you to be driving a pair of horses about the roads in a curricie, when every gentleman is out hunting — by gad, Sir, the thing is perfectly ridiculous, and you'll be the laughing-stock of the whole neighbourhood. By gad, Sir, every girl in the village would turn up her nose at you, let alone the young ladies of the county — don't look at one of them if you don't hunt ;—ours is, *par excellence*, a fox-hunting county — half the fellows who go out with the hounds hate hunting for the hunting only. They go to the covert side to meet their friends and neighbours. It is a grand reunion — a sort of general clubhouse gathering, *sub Jove frigido* — they are expected to be there — it is the fashion of the neighbourhood — you *must* hunt here, or tell your governor to sell his place again, and go elsewhere."

"Well, but the huntsman has not left

his card upon the governor yet, which makes him feel sore on the subject."

"It would surprise me wonderfully if he had. Will Laing don't visit at gentlemen's houses, although he is a great man in the field."

"I meant Mr. Knightley," Alphonso said.

"He is the master of the hounds, my young novice, not the huntsman; but why is that to prevent your hunting? The master of the hounds is a mere master of the ceremonies in the field. It is not necessary you should know him personally to hunt with his hounds, not a whit more than you should know the manager of a theatre, the stewards of the races, or the committee of a hunt ball. The hunting field is open to all alike who conduct themselves with propriety — noblemen, gentlemen, professional men, farmers, tinkers, and tailors, the latter generally preponderating as to numbers."

"Where do all the tailors come from, then?" asked Alphonso, very innocently.

"Can't say, my boy, but when you first

come out, there will be one from Hardington."

"What, Jones? he don't keep a pony."

"He keeps a goose, though, as well as another old gentleman I could mention—however, *n'importe*—*you'll* be a confounded tailor if you don't come out,"—(and aside, "a d—d tailor if you do")—"but now as to horseflesh, you must get at least half a dozen hunters directly, and short time enough to put them in trim, having only a month to do it. Every man shows on the first of November,—a regular thing, an established custom."

"Show where, Duncombe?"

"In the field, to be sure, on horseback at the place of meeting;" (and aside—"I'll be bound you show off deuced soon.")

"The governor won't stand half a dozen more horses," replied Alphonso.

"The governor be hanged! he *must* stand it, or shut up shop here, and go back to Manchester; when you are at Rome, you must do as the people of Rome do."

"I have been at Rome, Duncombe."

“Every cockney goes there now-a-days; but what did you see there?”

“Oh! St. Peter’s Church, the Coliseum, and lots of other things, I don’t recollect what.”

“Well; now you are in *Huntingshire*, you must go and see the hounds, and as you haven’t any nags yet, I’ll tell you what I’ll do. I will let you have a couple of mine. I can’t spare more — well-seasoned hunters, know their business, carry you like a bird across country,—and you shall have them at cost price, just to set you going. They have had their regular sweats, hard as nails in condition, splendid animals to look at, heads and tails well up; all alive ho, and right as a trivet” —(so they were, each having only three legs to stand upon!). “I keep six myself, but I can soon pick up two more, and you shall have these two as a particular favour.”

“Thank you, Duncombe, I feel greatly obliged by your kind offer, but I must ask the governor about them first.”

“Put them in the stable first, and ask

your governor how he likes them afterwards. Why, what did you do at Oxford? Ask the governor about everything you meant to do?"

"No, not exactly;—but he wouldn't let me keep hunters there — said I must read for a double first — so kept me a private tutor instead."

"Well, but what did you do on your own account?"

"Pulled in a four-oared boat."

"Very slow."

"Gave champagne breakfasts."

"Rather fast."

"And drove tandem with a hired team."

"Decidedly snobbish; but what became of all the Latin and Greek you had to swallow?"

"Well, Duncombe, I read deuced hard for a double first, being crammed all the long vacation into the bargain, and"—

"Got plucked at last," added the Captain, "just as I thought. That comes of following your governor's advice. He thought

to make a great man of you in the Latin and Greek line, and made a fool of himself and you too: now, if he had set you spinning away with your couple of hunters and covert hack, champagne breakfasts, wine parties, and hot suppers, doing the thing in style, as a young fellow with lots of tin ought to do, he might have made something like a sportsman and a gentleman of you by this time. Men would have spoken of young Shuttleworth as a fine, dashing, good sort of fellow. What do they say of you now? That you were a spooney at college, knew nobody worth knowing, except Sally Jones and Polly Brown, whom everybody knew to their cost; went for a double first, without knowing Xenophon from Sophocles, and got plucked as a matter of course. Now you must begin *de novo*, strike out a new line, cut a swell with your ten hunters, and a spicy drag to the place of meeting, and you will get on in the county, and be thought something of. If you don't go out hunting, you may as well go to

the d—l at once. So now we will go for a cup of cat-lap to the old woman."

"Let us have another bottle first, Duncombe."

"Not a drop more now, my boy, but we can finish off with a jug of mulled claret and a grilled bone in your own room, after your mamma is gone to roost."

On entering the drawing-room, Mamma Shuttleworth was observed reclining in her arm-chair, fast locked in the arms of Morpheus, and snoring loudly.

"Hark to Juno, hark! cry," screeched the Captain, considerably elated by the last bottle of claret, and uttering a scream, which bundled the old lady out of her chair like a bale of cotton.

"Mercy on us!" she exclaimed, "what's the matter? is the house on fire?"

"Only your bed-room chimney," replied the Captain.

"Oh, my gracious!" cried the old lady, who had a great dread of fire, beginning

to roll out of the room as fast as her short legs could carry her.

“Stop, mother,” said Alphonso, “it’s only the Captain’s gammon, there is nothing the matter.”

“Oh! but I am sure I heard some one screaming.”

“Just the Captain spoke a little loud, mother, to rouse you out of your nap—that’s all, honour bright,—so sit down again in your easy chair.”

“Ah! Captain, you’re always cutting your jokes, but ’twas your fault I was caught napping—sitting so long over your wine; I can’t think what you men can find to talk about.”

“Why, my dear madam, I was giving your son a little insight into country life, of which he is marvellously ignorant, and some very necessary advice how to become a popular country gentleman.”

“That’s very kind of you, Captain.”

“It was intended so, I assure you.”

“Then, what is he to do?”

“He must keep a stud of hunters to

begin with, as every gentleman in the country does, who can afford it."

"Oh! dear, dear, I'm so afraid of Alphonso hunting, he'll be sure to meet with some fearful accident, break his arm or his leg, or something dreadful."

"That's all stuff and nonsense, my dear madam, begging your pardon — old ladies' fancies — people that hunt don't break their arms and legs oftener than other people who don't hunt; — but if you want your son and heir there, to be set down as a molly coddle, don't let him hunt — that's all. His father made a fool of him at college, and you will make a fool of him at home, so there's an end of the business." On which the Captain gave vent to his spleen by stamping on the tail of a large, sleek Angola cat lying on the hearth-rug before the fire, causing pussy to speak out pretty loudly.

"My goodness, what ails Tomasina to-night," exclaimed her mistress, "twirling and twisting her tail about in that fashion?"

“Got the cramp, I suppose, like myself, from eating too many filberts,” replied the Captain. “Egad, Al— no, hang it, Shuttleworth, junior—I should like just a liqueur glass of pure cognac to settle matters.”

“Better have a cup of tea, Captain dear,” suggested the lady.

“No, I thank you, I never take tea except at breakfast, or coffee either.”

“Well, Alphonso, will you ring the bell, and order what the Captain wants?”

“I wish to goodness, madam, you would call your son by some other than that outlandish name, it sounds so ridiculous that I cannot pronounce it,— Augustus, if you like, that’s bad enough, but Gus would do for short— or even Zack for Zachariah.”

“Oh, Captain, I cannot bear them short nick names, Jack, and Tom, and Joe, they sound so vulgar—and then, I can’t abide Jim and Bill.”

“To the latter, I confess a particular objection,” replied the Captain, “as they are generally deuced disagreeable fellows, when

they pay one a visit about Christmas time. Now, George Brown, Harry Jones, or any fellow with a common name, may get plucked at Oxford half-a-dozen times if he likes, and he is soon forgotten in a crowd of other such names; but an Alphonso, or Cicero, or any out of the way name, will be remembered with his plucking to the end of his days. 'Who's your friend?' asked a gentleman of me the other day, when your son had been speaking to me, 'Shuttleworth,' was my reply. 'Not Alphonso, eh? the fellow whom every one of that day remembers to have been plucked for his great go at Oxford!' Personally your son is unknown, — but the name of Alphonso strikes every Oxford man directly, as connected with that unlucky go; so, in plain terms, my dear madam, if you don't cut the name, I must cut the connection; instead of Zack call him Jack at once, the last name instead of the first, — Jack Shuttleworth will do, it sounds sporting, — Jacks are generally good fellows."

“Well, Captain, but I never heard anything about this before.”

“And never would hear it,” he added, “to your dying day, from anybody except Tom Duncombe. People who come to eat your good dinners, and drink your wine, don’t say unpalatable things to your face, although they say deuced disagreeable things behind your back; but I have noticed many a sneer at the name of Alphonso, which meant, ‘that will stick in his path through life.’ I wish the lad well, and therefore boldly tell you the truth.”

“Then, Captain, I will call him John for the future; and now, as it is past eleven, I must wish you good night.”

It is unnecessary to state the reasons — there were more than one or two — why Captain Duncombe appeared to take such an especial interest in Alphonso as to inflict this lecture on his mamma, with whom he generally contrived to have the best of the argument; for Mrs. Shuttleworth, from his high connexions on the

mother's side, and his general acquaintance with the county families around them, always gave way to his opinion on social questions ; irrespective of which, the old lady had taken a great fancy to him, from his handsome person, agreeable manners, and lively good-humour. The Captain knew also the fashions, forms, ceremonies, and etiquette observed in the higher circles, and gave her many useful hints on such subjects, so that he might say or do almost what he pleased at Hardington.

Now, the Captain was too good a judge to make a market of Alphonso in his first deal with the two hunters. They were both old and stale on their legs, but just the animals to suit a novice ; they knew their business well, and *would* go with the hounds ; and one named Mameluke pulled hard to be where he ought to be — a trifle too hard for a timid rider ; in short, it was little use pulling against him, but let alone, he went pleasantly enough. The bargain was concluded that night over the grilled bone and jug of mulled claret, and the two

horses were to become Alphonso's property, for one hundred and eighty guineas, if approved of the next day; and it is almost needless to state that Alphonso, deeming it imperative upon him to hunt, and being greatly pleased with the form and condition of the horses, gave the Captain his draft for the amount claimed, without hesitation, and Marmion and Mameluke were transferred to his own stables.

Now, Alphonso, having the hunters, was in the predicament of the boy who first purchased a bird, and then felt obliged to buy a book to keep it by. He had not the most remote idea of riding over a fence, and was, therefore, under the necessity of applying to the Captain for instruction, who, after a few preliminary lessons as to mounting and dismounting, holding the reins, seat in saddle, &c. &c., took him out on Marmion, the oldest and steadiest of the two (it being now the first week in October), for a short trial across country.

"Now, Jack," cried the Captain, as they approached a flight of hurdles across a

clover field, "this is soft falling if you are capsized ; so, harden your heart, sit down firmly in your saddle, stick tight with your knees and thighs, lean a little backward, as you see me do—give Marmion his head, and come along."

At the first charge, Alphonso got his discharge from the pig-skin, being thrown forward, like a trapped frog, with arms and legs extended, on to his horse's neck, around which he clung with instinctive tenacity, much to the disgust of Marmion, who, not being accustomed to such hugging from his former riders, threw up his head, which, coming in contact with Alphonso's olfactory organ, or nasal projection, sent him back to his seat with a bloody nose.

"Well done, Jack," shouted the Captain, "ably recovered."

"I call it very badly done, Duncombe, to get a bloody nose the first go."

"Save the lancet, Jack—you wanted bleeding uncommonly ; save you from an apoplectic attack."

“Gad, I don’t much fancy this sort of thing.”

“Well, nobody quite likes having his claret spilt,—but it’s a good beginning, bleeding and physicking for training, which every man wants as much as his horse, to ride well to hounds;—now you’ll follow my advice perhaps the next time, by leaning well back when your horse rises at his fence, which would have saved you that noser, but young, obstinate fellows always think they know better than their teachers.”

“Indeed, Duncombe, I did not despise your advice, but somehow or other I could not sit back, being suddenly jerked out of the saddle.”

“Well, never mind, riding don’t come quite so natural to men as whooping to owls,—but practice makes perfect; turn about, and at it again, now the claret tap is stopped.”

This time Alphonso fared better, having one leg only thrown out of his stirrup— it was an *all but*, but he did not fall.

“That’s your game, Jack, I see you don’t mean falling; you’ll do, my boy, presently.”

And after a few more jerkings and jumpings over the hurdles, Alphonso began to like the fun, and the Captain, patting him on the back, thought they had better leave “well alone” for that day, and go home to luncheon.

Alphonso related his adventures with great glee to his mamma, who, being kept in the dark as to the bloody nose, began to think her darling would turn out a hero in the hunting field, and eclipse the whole country by his wonderful exploits in horsemanship. Shuttleworth, senior, although a non-hunting man, and averse, at first, to his son’s joining in the pursuit of the fox, was obliged at last to yield to Duncombe’s arguments.

“Your son must hunt, Sir,” remarked the Captain, “and if you object to his meeting Mr. Knightley’s hounds, he can hunt with the Marquis of Dunkerton’s pack, which generally meet within moderate

distances. I know Dunkerton well, and will introduce your son to him, that is, provided he hunts, not otherwise."

"Very well, Duncombe, then I suppose he must hunt."

"No doubt about it, my good Sir, so let him do the thing well, and I will give him all the necessary instruction before the regular season commences."

Matters being thus arranged, the Captain obtained an order to purchase three more hunters, which was done without delay, and greatly to his own satisfaction, — Duncombe pocketing by the deal a hundred and fifty guineas, the allowance made to him by his friend Dickens the horse-dealer, for sticking them into the cotton lord at a very stiff price.

We may here remark that the Marquis of Dunkerton hunted the country adjoining Mr. Knightley's, and we may also add, that the greatest contrast was perceptible between the two masters. The marquis, who also kept race horses, and betted heavily on turf events, being most imperious and

abusive in the field, whilst Mr. Knightley's conduct was remarkable for courtesy and forbearance towards those who might unwittingly interfere with his sport.

CHAPTER VI.

THE fox-hunting community being now in tolerable jumping order, we may jump over the intervening space of time (not a very wide leap) to the first day of November, when the opening of the campaign was fixed for Wychwood Court, the seat of the master, where breakfast was provided on a large scale for the expected company.

One of the most conspicuous personages on this occasion was old Squire White, a tall, stout, robust man; as to age, approaching his sixty-fifth year, but still hale and hearty. Abel White was one of the old school of fox-hunters, fond of the sport, and, it must be admitted, rather fond of good port wine, which most people would suspect, from his jolly rubicund face.

Mr. White had lived a bachelor's life, having been once the owner of very large landed property in the county, of which, somehow — nobody could tell how — he had contrived gradually to dispossess himself, without any ostensible cause. He had lived well all his life, although not extravagantly; kept his four hunters, with a moderate establishment of servants; gave, in his turn, good, plain, bachelor dinners, with port, sherry, and madeira — the two latter seldom tasted by himself — but at this rate, people said, he had never lived up to half his income; still that income was now reduced to about seven hundred per annum, this small property, with the old Elizabethan house at Westwood, having been strictly entailed by his grandfather's will. He was on visiting terms, however, with every family in the county, and a most welcome guest at every dinner table, from his jovial good-humour and almost inexhaustible fund of anecdotes.

Mr. Welford, of Elmhurst, who had been bequeathed a very large fortune, amassed

in trade by a rich uncle, presented a most striking contrast to old Squire White, both as to bodily frame and appearance,—Welford being slightly formed, of thin and prepossessing features, and, as to dress, a dandy of the first water. Here were presented the two opposite specimens of Old and Young England. The large, full red coat, broad brimmed hat, loose cravat, huge waistcoat, woollen cloth continuations, and mahogany-topped boots, with the strap over the knee, in opposition to the swallow-tailed scarlet, the white buckskins, and the highly polished jack-boot, just then coming into fashion, which has always struck me as more appropriate to the leg of a French postilion than to that of an English fox-hunter.

Welford had now reached his thirty-fifth year, and in reply to the question often asked by his friends, why he did not marry, coolly remarked “that he had not yet seen any woman at all adapted to his taste;” thereby insinuating that he had only to ask, to have any young lady he might con-

descend to admire; for which, and his conceited, foppish manners, he was anathematised by old Squire White as an insolent, upstart puppy, giving himself more airs than the greatest nobleman in the land.

There was another rich bachelor also present on this occasion, Addleby, of Addleby Hall, who bore the rather appropriate nickname of Addlehead, from his eccentricities. Still, to those mammas who cared little whether their daughters married a man or a mopstick, provided he had money, Addleby presented the prospect of a good investment in the matrimonial line, with a fine old place, and his ten thousand a year; although, as the old squire said, "he exhibited the devil's own temper when put out of his way, which could only be excused by the bee in his bonnet."

The only other person I shall now stop to notice out of this goodly company—amounting in all, with red, black, blue, and green coats, to about three hundred horsemen—is Will Lane, the huntsman, who was born at Wychwood, and had

lived from boyhood in the Knightley family. Will, from hard work, and his entrance on his second half century, began to look very badgery about the head; but being of a thin, spare frame, he still exhibited the greatest activity in the field, and rode as well up to his hounds as in the first season of his appointment to the post of huntsman. Will was what is called a character, *i. e.* he possessed certain idiosyncrasies or peculiarities of disposition, speech, and action; but he was a great favourite with the whole fox-hunting community, and most highly esteemed by his master for his strict integrity and the zealous discharge of his duties in the kennel and the field.

“Well, Will,” asked the old squire, “what do you think about a scent to-day?”

“I’m a-thinking, Sir,” he replied, “that there’s a feeling in the *hair*, which will make your old mare’s tail shake; although I’m rather dubious about giving any decided opinion on scent, which, as you knows, squire, is rayther a ticklish subject.”

“There’s the young cotton lord come out to see how we do things, Will,” continued the old squire; “that’s him talking with Captain Duncombe, on the big brown horse—he must be blooded to-day.”

“Oh, in course, squire, if I catches him up at the finish, but I’m a-thinking he don’t look a likely one to be there if we have much to do.”

A full hour having been consumed in the preliminary business of the day, breakfasting and partaking the master’s good cheer, the order was given to “move off,” and Will Lane trotted away with his pack, when a brace of foxes were quickly on foot, which were rattled about at a spanking rate for ten minutes, when the old dog rode away in full view of the ladies, a large number of whom had driven over to grace the opening meet of the season.

A shrill view holloa from Charley, the first whipper-in, brought the hounds tearing out of covert, when, settling down on the scent, they went away like a flash of lightning.

“Come along,” cried Duncombe to his protégé Alphonso — “he’s away.”

“Who’s away?” asked the novice.

“The fox, to be sure — you spooney,” muttered the Captain, “come on, I say, and give your horse his head; we have got a capital start — there go the darlings, right before us;” and setting spurs to his horse’s side, the Captain went down the hill on his thorough-bred, as if he was riding for the Derby. Alphonso, greatly against his inclination, was obliged to follow, for Mameluke, maddened by the clatter of the cavalcade behind him, pulled enough to tear his rider’s arms off — for go he would, although not possessing sufficient speed to overtake his late owner. Now riding fast down hill tries a man’s pluck far more than riding across country; and the perspiration broke out over Alphonso’s face (who was also sadly out of condition from insufficient training and too good living) before he reached the bottom of it; in fact, as the Captain observed when looking back, “Jack was in an awful funk, with a very wishy

washy kind of seat, and holding hard on by the reins," at which he was still tugging, with might and main.

"I'm a-thinking, Captain," remarked Will Lane, who had passed Alphonso coming down the hill, "that young friend of yours will be doing mischief to himself or somebody else afore he goes much further."

"Not unlikely, Will, for he is a confounded tailor on horseback, and sits like a bale of cotton, — but we can't stop for repairs now."

This was said as they were approaching the park palings, which with the hah-hah they both cleared.

"Now then," cried the Captain, looking back as they were rising the hill, "if young Shuttleworth can sit *that*, he will sit any thing — Mameluke will have it, and by Jove, Sir, he's over, neck and crop, somehow — hanging round his horse's neck — no matter — he has done it in a fashion of his own, and here he comes up the hill, all right again in the pig-skin."

To say that Alphonso enjoyed the fun, or

saw any body or any thing save his horse's ears and the fences before him, would be an absurdity. Mameluke *would* go where the hounds went, and his rider, finding it hopeless to pull against him, gave up the attempt in despair, still holding on by the reins, and clinging to his horse with fearful tenacity. Once or twice, he thought of throwing himself out of the saddle, but that he knew, at the pace he was going, must be attended with a serious fall; and now, having reached the Captain, he was cheered on by him, and restored to a little more complacency of mind.

"Well done, Jack, you're a trump, and no mistake — beat the whole field, by jingo! Come along, my boy, we have got it all to ourselves, and you shall have the brush."

"I say, Duncombe," he asked, "when will it be over? I'm tired to death already, and can't sit much longer on horseback."

"Then tumble off, and you'll be killed at once, Jack, by some of those hundred fine fellows behind riding over you."

"Oh dear! oh dear!" muttered Alphonso,

as he was torn through a rasping bullfincher, "I wish I had taken father's advice, and never bought a hunter."

Forty minutes without a check on a warm, sultry day, with a burning scent, brought the old fox's career to an untimely end in the middle of a large grass field, and Alphonso, now completely exhausted also by his unwonted exertions and the heat of the weather, reeling out of his saddle, fell fainting on the ground.

"Halloo, Jack!" cried the Captain, "what's the matter?" But no answer being returned by his prostrate friend, Duncombe, leaving his horse, ran to his assistance, and by the aid of his pocket companion, containing a pretty stiff mixture of cognac and water, the prostrate hero was revived, and able to stand again, before Reginald Knightley and a few others came up.

"You are all right now, my boy," the Captain said, "but finish the flask, whilst I get the brush for you, and tip Will not to say any thing about the fainting fit — but, by Jove, it *is* hot work, and no wonder a

fellow who is not used to it felt a little squeamish."

Reginald's surprise and annoyance on beholding Alphonso the third in at the finish may be readily imagined; but having ridden in his wake for the last two miles, unable to catch Mameluke, he saw very clearly that the young cotton-spinner was indebted to the judgment of the old hunter, not his own, for the place he had been enabled to hold.

"Well, Knightley," exclaimed Duncombe, "a good beginning this—splendid thing—never went faster—and a glorious wind-up—nothing could be better."

"I am glad to find you are pleased," was the short and formal reply, uttered in a sneering tone peculiar to Reginald, who without further remark addressed the huntsman.

"Is master near at hand, Sir?" asked Will in return.

"Not more than a field or two behind, and you had better not throw the fox to the hounds before he comes up. But

where's the brush, Will? I want that for a lady."

"Very sorry, Sir," said Will, touching his cap, "but the Captain claimed it, as being first up."

"For that young cub, of course, to whom he has sold his old horse," added Reginald.

"Very likely, Sir, but I was a-thinking that young gentleman ought to be blooded."

"That young cotton-spinning blackguard shall never be blooded to our hounds, Will Lane," replied Reginald in a sharp, savage tone of voice, with which he turned on his heel and walked away.

The master having now reached the spot, the fox was thrown to the hounds, and after half an hour's respite, to allow stragglers to fall in, the order of march was again issued for drawing a fresh covert. Our novice, however, having had more than sufficient for one day, and glad of the opportunity to escape further punishment, no sooner found himself on the turnpike road than he gradually fell back into the rear rank of the cavalcade, and at a sharp

angle, when hid from the Captain's view, who was talking with other men, he turned his horse and trotted away home, burning to relate his wonderful adventures to his mamma, and exhibit the trophy he had won.

Great was the disgust of Mamma Shuttleworth when her hopeful son, rushing into the drawing-room, poked the brush into her face, exclaiming: — "There, mother, I have beaten all the field this morning, young Knightley and the whole lot, and won the brush."

"Lauks, Alphonso, do take that nasty stinking thing away; is that all you got by going out hunting?"

"Yes, mother, and something worth earning too, which the best riders can only get by beating a hundred and fifty others; do you call that nothing?—jumping over hedges and ditches and park palings, and riding five or six miles straight across country, without being thrown from my horse, and leaving every body behind me except Tom Duncombe and the huntsman. Why, mother, my name will be up all over the country, as

the best rider in Huntingshire; and Duncombe says he will introduce me to the Marquis of Dunkerton the day after tomorrow, when we are going out with his hounds."

"Well, my dear boy, I am glad to find you get on so well, but pray take that nasty fox's tail out of the room — my goodness, how it smells! — and well wash your hands, my dear, before you come down."

CHAPTER VII.

ABOUT half-past four that same afternoon, the Captain (who had become so domesticated at Hardington as to have an apartment there assigned to his especial use, to which a part of his very extensive wardrobe had been removed) returned from hunting, rather disgusted with Alphonso for giving him the slip, and on finding that unhappy wight snugly ensconced in an easy chair by the fire-side, he began to let loose at him for sneaking off before the day was half over.

“ You’re a nice man for a small party, Mr. Jack, to turn your back upon your friend, just when I was singing your praises to half a score of fellows ; and you may imagine my annoyance when asked

afterwards, 'Where's your friend, Duncombe? —lost a shoe, I conclude'—and some such other remarks not very agreeable to hear."

"Really, Duncombe, I beg your pardon for leaving you so abruptly, but the fact is, I was so thoroughly done by the heat, and my arms so cramped by pulling at Mameluke, that I could not have ridden over another fence,—so I thought it best to let well alone, and go home at once."

"Well, Jack, perhaps you acted wisely this time, but I had intended introducing you to a few men worth knowing, so you are the loser;—now ring the bell for a glass of sherry and a biscuit, since the contents of my flask went down your throat."

"You must say nothing about that to the governor, Duncombe, or you know the consequences."

"I am not such a fool, Jack, as to blab out of school, so now (after tossing off a couple of glasses of sherry) let us go to the stables to see our nags."

"Oh! never mind them, Duncombe, they are sure to be taken care of."

“ I am far from thinking that a sure thing, Jack, in such an establishment as yours, where there are more masters than men,—so come along.”

Now the Captain was a very particular man about his horses—quite as particular in seeing them well-cared for and dressed, as his own precious person, and he could not afford to lose a good hunter when he had made him—it would be so much lost time, and income too—for the latter depended very much on the former,—the Captain being a sort of gentleman horse-dealer.

“ By Jove, Sir,” exclaimed Duncombe, as they passed through a side door into the stable-yard, “ just as I thought! that ruffian of yours has got Saladin tied up outside the stable door, without a rag upon his back, and, by all that’s wonderful, he is brushing the dirt off with the besom! Halloo!” shouted the Captain, unable to restrain his anger one moment longer—“ halloa, you d——d ragamuffin, drop that besom and take my horse into the stable,

or, by Jove, Sir, I'll double thong you. Do you hear, you oaf?" exclaimed the Captain, as the man continued scrubbing away, his horse's fore leg being strapped up to prevent his kicking.

No answer being returned, Duncombe rushed up, and seizing the besom from the helper's hand, threw it across the yard, exclaiming in great passion—"If you ever dare touch a horse of mine again with that article, I'll knock your head off with it."

"Then clean un yerself," replied the man; "I won't have no further hand with un."

"Get out of my way, you insolent black-guard," cried the Captain, "or I'll cut you to ribbons,"—and taking his horse into the stable, he threw the cloth over his back, and went into the saddle-room.

"Why, what are you going to do?" asked Alphonso in amazement.

"Going to do, Sir! Do you think I will stay here another minute, to be insulted by that ruffian of yours to my face?"

"Oh! pray don't go, Duncombe. You promised to dine with us, you know; and I'll

make it all right with Thomas—he shall beg your pardon directly.”

“ He shall leave this stable, Sir,” replied Duncombe, fiercely, “ and your service this moment, or I’ll never put foot in your house again, as long as my name is Duncombe. Do you think a gentleman is to put up with insolence like this from a servant ?”

“ I am really very sorry” replied Alphonso, “ for what has happened ; and if you insist on Thomas being discharged, he shall leave.”

Thomas, on hearing this alternative, being in nowise disposed to quit such comfortable quarters, now came up very submissively, to beg the Captain’s pardon, saying, “ it was Mr. Morgan’s orders (the head groom) that the horses should have the dirt first brushed off outside the stable door.”

“ Hang Mr. Morgan !” exclaimed the Captain—“ he shall not be my master, if he is yours, and if he does not know better the management of hunters, he has no business in a hunting stable. I told you

not to take my horse outside the door — how dare you disobey my orders ?”

“ I’ll never do it again, Captain, if you’ll pass it over this once,” said Thomas, very humbly.

“ And you will never use the besom again, will you ?” asked the Captain, “ like an ostler at a public-house dressing a cart-horse.”

“ No, Sir, I never won’t, if you’ll forgive me this time.”

“ Very well,” muttered the Captain, not relishing the idea of losing his dinner ; “ I shall come down again at eight o’clock to see how my horse is done up for the night ;” with which he walked leisurely out of the stable, as if he were the master of it, not Alphonso Shuttleworth ;—but before regaining the house he had recovered his temper.

“ I say, Morgan,” remarked Thomas to his superior, when they were alone, “ that ’ere Captain comes it pretty strong for a wisitor.”

“ I wouldn’t have knocked under to such

as him, Tom, if I had been in your place," was the reply.

"Well, I think you would, Mr. Morgan, for I turned it over in my mind. There is old master and young master, very well in their way—easy, good sort of people—never finds fault; then you see good sittivations aren't to be had this time o' year just for axing—and above all, I should be uncommon sorry to leave a very particular friend of mine, a fine portly old gentleman what stands in the corner of the cellar, with the three hexes marked on him;—so putting this and that together, Mr. Morgan, I thought it best to knock under to the Captain, for in these matters he's master's master, who, 'tween you and I and the wall, just knows an 'oss from a helephant, and that's all."

Pending this short dialogue the Captain had ascended to his room to prepare his toilet for dinner, and it must be admitted few could surpass him in this business, his wardrobe being supplied by the first artist of his class in London. Duncombe possessed the art of dressing well, and looking

well when dressed ; in short, he was a model for a tailor to fit. Scores of men never look well in the best cut coat ; but the Captain's tailor declared he would rather make him a suit for nothing than receive double the price from other gentlemen. The Captain did credit to his tailor, and procured him many excellent customers,—and on the other hand, the tailor gave long credit to the Captain, by never sending in his bill under five years ; and he might have dispensed with this unnecessary trouble, since he never got his money.

After dinner the Captain expatiated on Alphonso's performances in the field, which had far surpassed his expectations.

“ He will do, Sir, now,” he said, addressing his host,—“ your son has made a most successful *début*, and won his spurs gallantly. Fifty men asked me who that young dare-devil was on the chestnut horse. ‘ Jack Shuttleworth, of Hardington,’ was my reply. ‘ Never heard of him before,’ remarked one ; ‘ Seems a good sort of fellow,’ said another ; ‘ Of course he'll become a member of the

club,' added a third: so you see, Sir, I was not very far wrong when I told you fox-hunting would make a man of him, that is, if you wish him to become known and popular in the county."

"Well, Duncombe, I dare say you are right; but my only fear was that he would never ride well enough to follow the hounds."

"Beat every man out to-day, Sir, save your humble servant and Will Lane; and the day after to-morrow, I purpose introducing him to the Marquis."

"I'm sure John ought to be very much obliged to you, Captain, for taking all this trouble about him," added Mrs. Shuttleworth,— "only I hope you won't make him do too much — he's not so strong as you are, and he was always a poor sickly child."

"Well, my dear Madam, I do not dispute your word, but to look at him now he's just the subject for an insurance office, and bids fair to live till he's a hundred."

"But, Captain, dear, it must be dreadful dangerous riding over hedges and ditches to follow those dogs, and after all to bring

home nothing but a nasty, dirty, stinking fox's tail."

"Well, but I suppose you wouldn't dress a fox," retorted the Captain, "if Jack could bring one home."

"Dress a fox for dinner, Captain! Whoever heard of such a thing? I'm sure Mr. Antoine, our French cook, wouldn't allow it to be brought into the kitchen."

"Perhaps not, my dear Madam; a dish of fricasseed frogs is much more in his line than a roasted fox. These French cooks never trouble themselves about plain roast and boiled; but they will hash up one of your old shoes with their sauces and seasonings, spices and what-nots, &c., that you would not know it from a maintenon cutlet. My man, when we were in Paris last summer, saw one of these *artistes*, as they call themselves, making gravy for a fowl he was condescending to roast; and this was the process he adopted: after drawing, he washed the inside, as well as his hands, in a small basin of water, and this, with its contents, was transferred to the saucepan

for gravy, with sundry other little piquant materials to make it palatable."

"La! Captain, what a nasty, filthy man! It makes one sick to think of such things."

"What won't poison will fatten, my dear," remarked Papa Shuttleworth; "and there's another old saying, that every person eats a peck of dirt before he dies."

"He need not be a long-lived man to do that," added Duncombe; "for my belief is, with this confounded French cookery, most men eat a sack at least before they reach their fortieth year: but kickshaws, patties, and all that sort of thing, don't suit my palate, after knowing how they are concocted; so just hand me some of those walnuts, Jack; for, according to the vulgar old saying, 'An apple and a nut you may eat after a slut.'"

On the withdrawal of Mamma Shuttleworth the three gentlemen drew their chairs round the fireside, settling themselves down for a cosy half-hour or so with a fresh bottle of claret.

"I think, Duncombe," said Shuttleworth

senior, "you know something of Rushmead Farm, belonging to Mr. Perrin."

"Well; and I have good cause to remember it, having been nearly drowned in that confounded dyke, dignified by the name of a brook, where, from the boggy nature of the ground, my horse floundered in head-foremost; and, but for the farmer's team coming to my rescue, he had been food for the hounds within half an hour."

"Perhaps you know Mr. Perrin also, Duncombe?"

"Yes; and a very good sort of man he is; but having sons now grown up, he wishes to sell his farm to set them up in business also. The soil is good, although requiring draining; and it is said that, being surrounded by his land, the first offer has been already made to Colonel Maxwell, which is, of course, fair enough."

"Oh! certainly," remarked Shuttleworth; "but my agent tells me the Colonel is not very flush of cash, and rather partial to what he has."

"Your agent is not far out; but he does

not know, perhaps, what I know about this little farm, which, although measuring only one hundred acres, is worth about £20,000."

"How so?" inquired Mr. Shuttleworth, pricking up his ears at the sound of a bargain as a hunter does at the horn.

"A mine of wealth lies under these dirty acres," continued the Captain; "black diamonds, sir, so a friend of mine assures me, a clever geologist, who walked with me over the farm, for I thought it would be just the place to suit me—a nice snug little hunting-box—although I fear it will go too high for my finances."

"Well," added Mr. Shuttleworth, "I might be tempted to make a bidding, if the property is put up to auction—not otherwise, of course."

Nothing more was said upon the subject that evening; but Mr. Shuttleworth had already resolved in his own mind to set his agent to work out more about this farm, and endeavour, if possible, to ascertain the price asked by the owner of it.

The *auri sacra fames* is well described

by the Latin poet. It is an accursed hunger, never satisfied—*quo plus habet eo plus cupit*. There are no limits to its craving appetite. Mr. Shuttleworth thought only of money, and making money—how, or by what means, he cared not ; and that night his dreams were about Rushmead Farm, and the bed of black diamonds underneath it.

But of what was the Captain thinking that same night when he retired to his own room ?

“Hah! hah!” he muttered, as he stood surveying himself in a large mirror, “you won’t beat me in this respect, Master Jack ; and I rather suspect no girl would hesitate a second between the two. Yet that confounded money knocks down the best-looking fellow in the world, without a blow, when papas interfere ; but I think now these two governors — the Colonel and the cotton lord — are sure to fall out about this farm, when it will be my turn to fall in.”

Now, the Captain had lately taken it into

his royal consideration, that Huntingshire was a very good county for a sportsman to live in, possessing many recommendations to a man in his circumstances and rather peculiar calling as a gentleman horse-dealer; and, after weighing the pros and cons deliberately over, the Captain had come to the conclusion that the best thing he could do was to marry Edith Maxwell, and establish his head-quarters at Morton Grange. He had become of late a great favourite with the Colonel and Mrs. Maxwell, and was always welcomed by the young lady with a cheerful smile, so that he indulged the idea—not a very unnatural one—that, with his handsome person and agreeable conversation, he could easily win any young girl's affections by a little extra flattery and attention.

Moreover, Edith was a girl any man might feel proud of; and being an only child, she would, of course, succeed to all her father's and mother's property. The greatest obstacle likely to stand in his path was his *protegé* Jack, with his father's

cotton bags of money; and therefore, as he termed it, to set the two governors by the ears, he had hatched up this story about Mr. Perrin's farm, rightly conjecturing this would prove a *casus belli* between the haughty Colonel and the money-making cotton man.

Young Knightley, he believed, would not marry any one except a woman of large fortune. Welford was too great an ass, and Addleby too great an idiot, to cause him the least uneasiness; so the Captain had already settled the thing — that Edith was sure to fall in love with him, and the Colonel to consent to their marriage without hesitation.

“I hate housekeeping,” he soliloquised; “so the old pair of birds will take this trouble off my hands. During the summer I will take my wife to the different races, where I can pick up crumbs enough to pay our expenses, and then return for the hunting season to Morton Grange, and do as heretofore — a snug little business in the horse-dealing line.”

Having thrown his fly, the Captain awaited with the patience of an angler to see it taken by the greedy old trout for whom it was prepared, entertaining no doubt as to the final result. Mr. Shuttleworth had already exhibited unmistakable signs of being attracted to the lure; but, with his extreme caution, no further allusion was made to the little farm during Duncombe's stay at Hardington; yet the next day a secret consultation was held with his agent, and directions given him to sound Farmer Perrin as to price, and advance upon the Colonel's offer a thousand pounds or two, when he could ascertain what that was; and, to avoid collision with his neighbour, the agent was to buy it ostensibly on his own account.

CHAP. VIII.

THAT same evening the Shuttleworths had issued invitations for a dinner party on rather a large scale; including the Maxwells, Mrs. Duncombe and her daughters, Welford, Addleby, Major Hamilton Townsend, a retired officer of dragoons, who had lately come to reside in the village of Hardington, with his wife and a large family of young children, the Rev. John Sherrard, the vicar of the parish, and a few others from the neighbouring watering place of Waterton; the number of guests exceeding twenty.

This was, to use the Captain's expression, "the first throw off of the Shuttlecocks" to gain a footing in the county, by a gorgeous display of their plate and furni-

ture. The dinner consisted of every delicacy of the season, irrespective of the manufactured dishes of Monsieur Antoine. The wines were the best that could be bought, and, from the servants being thoroughly practised in the parts they had to perform, nothing was *out of place* that was placed on the table, but there was a stiffness and rigidity throughout the entertainment which none could dispel or soften down. The host and hostess were *out of place*. A large dinner party, out of their own sphere of life, was to them a new and perplexing affair. They were too nervous and anxious to feel comfortable themselves, and their uneasiness appeared to have imparted itself to their guests—and, save for the Major, who cared only for a good dinner, and plenty of good wine, conversation would have come to a dead stop. The Major rattled away with his stories and anecdotes, commenting also upon all the viands placed on the table.

“Splendid turbot that, Ma’am,” addressing Mrs. Shuttleworth, on whose left hand

he was sitting ; “ had his twin brother for dinner yesterday sent me by Dunkerton ; with a short note — have it here, somewhere,” fumbling in his pocket amongst a lot of other letters ; “ left it at home, I suppose. These were his words, however:— ‘ Dear Ham, — Large spread yesterday — opening day. My fool of a fishmonger sent me down two of a sort, which don’t agree at table or elsewhere — so you are the gainer. Fish won’t keep this weather, which is good for nothing but scent. He will serve your brats for a week. Yours ever, Dunkerton.’ The weight of this fish, Ma’am, was over forty pounds — obliged to boil him in the brewing copper, and bring him to table on the tea-tray.”

“ My gracious ! Major, what a monster he must have been ! I never heard the like.”

“ Oh ! nothing at all, Ma’am, to what I have seen at Torbay. Had a haul there last summer of one hundred turbot at once, none under five, and several over forty pounds in weight.”

“La, Major, what a sight! but I suppose fish was cheap there: we gave three guineas for ours.”

“All went to London, Ma’am, where the best of everything goes; my friend, to whom the place belongs, and the whole manor besides, couldn’t get one of these fish for a dinner party he had that day, although landed in sight of the Abbey windows; but was obliged to send to Exeter for his dish of fish.”

“How very provoking, Major; what’s the use of living near the sea if you can’t buy cheap fish, and plenty of it too?”

“All done by contract, Ma’am, with London dealers; London spoils every country place now for cheap living. I was staying with Lord Ballyroan in Ireland, last May — went to see a run of salmon; and, by gad, Ma’am, out of one pool the men took three hundred at one haul, and not a fish under ten pounds — splendid fellows! — made one’s mouth water to look at them — but not a fin could we get —

cars in waiting—off they went to Dublin and London.”

The Colonel, sitting opposite, opened his eyes very wide at this large take of salmon, and could not resist asking in what river it happened.

“The Boyne, Maxwell,” was the reply; “saw it with my own eyes.”

“I don’t doubt your word, Townsend, but you must admit it was rather an extraordinary draught.”

“And which,” added Duncombe to his neighbour, “I shall not swallow, if the Colonel does.”

“Rare Hermitage this, Shuttleworth,” tossing off a glass, “Dunkerton can’t beat it.”

“Glad to find you approve of it, Major; suppose you try it again.”

“With pleasure, Sir;” and down went another.

On the appearance of the second course, consisting of wild ducks and pheasants, the Major indulged in a long shot at the former, by recounting a midnight adven-

ture of his own on the Hampshire coast, in search of wild fowl.

“Paddled out on the mud, Maxwell, in snow shoes,—heavy work, with a duck-gun weighing twenty-five pounds on my shoulder,—as dark as pitch,—floundered about for an hour at least; heard a loud flapping over my head—fired at random, and down they came about my ears, Sir, like hail; picked up a score, Sir, besides those that were winged and escaped on the sand. My companion nearly drowned; went out too far, found the tide coming in, couldn't run for it, so what do you think he did, Maxwell?—sharp-witted fellow at a pinch—paddled back as far as he could, until the waves overtook him, then stuck the barrel of his large duck-gun in the mud, and held on by the butt end. A near thing with him, poor fellow; the water rose up to his chin and he gave himself up for lost—luckily for him it rose no higher; and he told me afterwards he never made himself so tall in his life—obliged to stand on tip-toe all the while,

with his teeth chattering like castanets from fright and cold."

"Why didn't he swim for it?" asked the Captain.

"Couldn't get his feet out of his wooden shoes, Duncombe—nailed to his board, Sir, like a fatting goose."

"Like what, Major?" asked Mrs. Shuttleworth.

"A fatting goose, Ma'am; poultrymen nail the feet of the geese to boards to prevent them running about when they are penned for fatting."

"La! how horrid, Major,—you men are so cruel."

"Not more than your sex, I believe," replied the Major; "what do you think of the girl skinning live eels?"

"I don't believe a word of it, Major; just a made-up story."

"Then you won't believe what I have seen myself in Paris, market women cutting off the hind legs of frogs, the only saleable part, it is said, and letting the fore legs carry away the body; in

two or three months the legs grow again."

"Mercy me, Major, what horrid cruel wretches; but our countrywomen wouldn't do such things."

"No saying, Ma'am; young ladies even are very cruelly disposed sometimes; cut men's hearts into ribbons, without caring a pin about the pain they inflict."

"They can take care of themselves, as I tell our John never to fall in love till he has found out that the lady won't say no."

"He will be clever to find out that," said the Major, "without first asking the question."

"Our Alphonso ain't bad-looking, Major, and, with what we can give him, not likely to be refused by any sensible girl;" casting a glance at Edith Maxwell, who was sitting by his side, which, by the way, the said young lady did not observe; but her worthy son, catching his mother's remark, although uttered in a lower key, turned as red about the gills as an excited turkey-cock; wishing his mamma had been in

London, or anywhere else, save where she was.

Alphonso had, on his mother's preparing to pair off her guests when dinner was announced, anticipated her intentions with regard to Edith by immediately offering her his arm, without observance of ceremony or etiquette, and nearly overturning his friend Duncombe in his eagerness to clutch the prize, which when obtained he scarcely knew what to do with. Alphonso was not a lady's man, having never mixed until very lately in ladies' society; and, when seated at table by the side of this beautiful girl, he felt tongue-tied in her presence, of which the Captain took advantage, having placed himself on her other side, by carrying on an animated conversation with her during the greater part of the dinner hour, greatly to the annoyance of his own partner and Alphonso also.

The Major by his stories and adventures by sea and land—mostly of home manufacture—had brought the assembled guests into something like sociable humour, some

laughing at, others commenting on, his Munchausen-like exploits, until even Alphonso's tongue became loosened, and he had ventured on some remarks to his fair neighbour, about what he had seen in his late travels on the continent; when his mother's allusion to Edith upset him altogether, and feeling himself so confused by the betrayal of his own thoughts in his burning cheeks, he scarcely dared look at her again. The Major's quick eye, detecting his confusion, was fixed stedfastly upon his face; and there was also that spiteful old spinster, Miss Hibbard, from Waterton, sitting opposite, enjoying his misery, by a malicious smile, which said as plainly as words—"Ah! young gentleman, I see what you are up to."

Alas! for poor Alphonso! He never felt or looked so sheepish before; and Duncombe noticed him too by saying, "You look rather warm this evening, Shuttleworth, suppose we try a glass of hock together?"

Refusal was out of the question, yet Alphonso at that moment felt savage

enough to kill his friend, but he dared not offend him, having foolishly trusted Duncombe with his secret *penchant* for Edith, only a month before, when rather elated by a few extra glasses of wine. At last, to his great relief, Mrs. Shuttleworth rose from table, and he never felt more delighted than when he saw the ladies retreating, rejoicing even more at losing his dinner partner, than he had rejoiced at first, on obtaining her arm; for he dreaded lest she might have suspected his true intentions towards her, and might perhaps treat him as a silly stupid boy for his *gaucherie* and lack of conversation.

The all-engrossing topic amongst the gentlemen that evening was the projected line of railway from Manchester to Liverpool.

“Wonderful invention this steam power, Colonel,” Mr. Shuttleworth remarked. “Gigantic enterprise, Sir, which will bring Manchester and Liverpool within four hours’ drive of each other,—the greatest discovery in scientific knowledge ever yet made,—travelling at the rate of sixty miles

an hour! The full development of the arts and sciences, of manufacturing and engineering appliances, has been reserved for the nineteenth century. This is the age of genius, Sir; who would in times past have thought of using boiling water as a propelling power—a large tea-kettle, Sir, as an instrument of locomotion?”

“It was thought of, however, Sir,” said Mr. Sherrard; “and the discovery of steam power made two hundred years ago by a clever Frenchman named Solomon de Caus, not less celebrated as an architect and painter than as an engineer; and this unfortunate man, on explaining his invention to Cardinal Richelieu, was considered mad, and confined in the Bicêtre, where he became, by long imprisonment, *actually mad*, and thus perished with his secret; so you see a confirmation of the old saying,—‘There is nothing new under the sun;’ and although we may in some few respects exceed the generations that have passed away, it is quite clear to me that in many other respects they have surpassed us.

What are our cities, as to their architecture, beauty, or extent, when compared with those mighty cities of old—Babylon and Nineveh? Why, London and Paris are mere market towns. We read in the book of the prophet Jonah that Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey. And who has not read of the mighty Babylon in ancient history—its lofty and massive walls—its palaces and hanging gardens, and the magnificent temple of Belus or Baal—the riches of which and the value of its sacred vessels were reckoned at twenty millions of our money?—and as to architecture, Sir, we are even in this all-enlightened century, as you suppose it to be, mere copyists.”

“That's right, my worthy pastor,” exclaimed Addleby. “You and I, although we were born in the last century, are not quite such fools as people take us to be; and four posters or the mail go quite fast enough for old-fashioned people.”

“I hope and expect, Mr. Addleby,” replied Mr. Shuttleworth, “that within ten

years there will not be such a thing as a mail coach left in England."

"These steam-engine fellows shall never pass through my lands," said Addleby.

"You will find more difficulty, Sir, in breaking through the Act of Parliament obtained by this Railway Company than they will in breaking through your land, although you will of course receive the full value for what they require; private interests are not in these times permitted to interrupt those grand schemes which are undertaken for the benefit of the people."

"Benefit of the people, indeed!" replied Addleby, now becoming excited, for he was a staunch Tory, Church and State man in politics. "What do these companies care about the people? They are neither more nor less than a combination of knaves, banded together for the sole purpose of enriching themselves at the expense of the public. That is the fact, Sir, and in my opinion there is, in this all-enlightened age, a greater preponderance of gulls and fools than has ever existed in any

other age since the creation of the world. Schemes and projects and plans are set forth by some half dozen artful rogues under the name of companies, in which people are ensnared, like fish in a net, by the promise of heavy interest for their money. I hate the very name of a company, Sir,—and this Railway Company I will oppose by every means in my power.”

“ Well, Addleby,” interposed the Captain, fearing a collision between him and Mr. Shuttleworth, “ it don’t signify much whether you oppose it or not, for, like a hard-mouthed runaway horse, this confounded company *will* go ahead, notwithstanding all our efforts to hold it back; but I hope and trust they won’t cut through our vale country, or I shall vote them a nuisance as well as yourself,—and now I propose an adjournment to the drawing-room, if our host has no objection, or the ladies will think we are all getting tipsy, and not fit for their society.”

On entering the drawing-room the Captain’s sisters, two fashionable-looking girls,

pretty rather than handsome, one in her twenty-second and the other in her nineteenth year, were seated at the piano, finishing a duet often rehearsed in private for public exhibition, and more accomplished musicians both in vocal and instrumental talent could not be found throughout the county of Huntingshire, and the ease and elegance with which each played her part could not fail to elicit the applause of the most indifferent listener. Welford was by their side in a moment, being himself excessively fond of music, and on the conclusion of their song paid them the highest compliments. He hoped they would favour him with something else — anything they pleased,—it could not fail to be attractive, with such sweet well-modulated voices as theirs,—he felt quite enraptured—he had never heard such perfect harmony!

The young ladies expressed their appreciation of Welford's compliments, they were of course mere compliments—they did not profess to be scientific performers—they knew very little of music—but they would

sing another duet with pleasure, provided he would in return favour them with a song—they had heard Mr. Welford possessed a very fine voice.

“Quite the reverse, I assure you,” that gentleman replied; “but I will cheerfully comply with your terms, for the pleasure of hearing you again.”

After a flourish of fingers over the piano,—a continuation of which, with sundry abrupt jerks and stops, threatening destruction to the strings of the instrument, and not inappropriately therefore denominated execution—an Italian bravura was commenced with its *Io's and Dio's*, with which, as it progressed, every person in the room appeared to be in raptures, although, save and except the two performers and Mrs. Maxwell and her daughter Edith, not another person knew the Italian language from Hebrew. With the termination of the song, and the applause following their performance, the two sisters retired from the piano, and Mr. Welford, according to promise, seated himself on the music stool, running his fingers

over the keys in very artistic style; but his compass of voice being infinitely inferior to either of the young ladies, after hearing his first stanza, little attention was paid to him by the company, and conversation was resumed throughout the room, much to his annoyance.

“ I say, Duncombe,” remarked Major Townsend, “ put a cap on that fellow’s head, and a shawl round his shoulders, and he would pass for a woman. Egad, Sir! his note is not higher than a hedge sparrow’s. I detest *he*-pianists, even among professionals; but there is something extremely *molly-coddlish* and effeminate to my mind in a gentleman sitting down to play his own accompaniment on the piano. Welford is a specimen of the nineteenth century man; a pink and white dollish face, silky and shoppy in manner, like a linendraper’s apprentice; and as to dress, the very quintessence of foppishness. Yet that fellow has the impudence to say there is no woman good enough for him in the whole county. Egad, Sir, no girl of sense would marry such a monkey-legged chap as that.”

“Money is everything nowadays, Townsend, with women as well as with men, and Welford may have a duke’s daughter if he likes; it is my belief no girl in this room or in the county would refuse him; she would be silly to do so, with his fine place and splendid fortune.”

“Well, Duncombe, that may be your opinion, it certainly is not mine; and I will bet a cool hundred that Miss Maxwell would refuse him point blank, and another moneyed man into the bargain, whom I noticed at dinner trying to make himself over agreeable, and who signally failed, if I am any judge of a girl’s physiognomy, or else she had got some cotton in her ear to bar other cottony speeches out; but there, you see, he is trying it on again, asking her to sing, I suppose, which she won’t do, it appears, at his solicitation.”

“Perhaps she may at mine, though,” thought the Captain, as he turned away to make the inquiry; but Edith Maxwell declined to sing at all that evening. Her Mamma objected to her doing so at present

before company—her voice was not sufficiently matured to sing in public.

The fact was, Mrs. Maxwell did not choose her daughter should sing that evening, for reasons she did not think it necessary to give any one; so the Captain contented himself by sitting and talking with her instead, to the visible mortification of Alphonso the Little, as he then appeared, from his utter inability to squeeze in a word. The Captain possessed the faculty, natural to some gifted individuals, of rendering himself most agreeable to ladies. His face was sufficiently handsome and manly to attract their attention, his smile very winning, his address most insinuating, and his conversation lively and agreeable; he made pretty little speeches, and paid pretty little compliments, without gross flattery, and all those little attentions which are a sure passport to a lady's favour. Many men attempt the same things without success, because there is a constraint or apparent condescension in their mode of speaking or manner, which

women, with their quick perception, immediately detect. Duncombe, therefore, had become a great favourite with the fair sex, from antiquated dowagers to misses in their teens. Even aunts patronised him; he was so respectful, so courteous, so much the gentleman. We must not be surprised then at Edith being pleased with him. She preferred his society to that of every other person in the room. She liked him very much as a companion to talk with — not flirt with — Edith was no flirt; and had necessity been laid upon her — stern necessity, from which there could be no appeal — to select one from this party as her companion for life, we have a shrewd suspicion her choice would have fallen on the Captain. But I do not say that a thought had as yet entered her mind about marrying him. Edith had not indulged any serious ideas about marriage; she had not troubled herself about it, for up to this period of life, although just seventeen, strange as it may appear to other precocious young ladies, she

had not fancied herself in love with any one.

Now our friend Alphonso, who not only as to the outline of his figure, but also in regard to innate propensities, resembled very much the fat boy as represented in the Pickwick Papers, having been grievously disappointed in his project of getting Edith alone into a snug corner, where he might feast his eyes upon her beauty without interruption, as the fat boy did on his Christmas pie, felt exceedingly annoyed by his Mentor, Duncombe, so coolly taking the game out of his hands when he had begun to flatter himself with the idea of playing a winning card; for Alphonso, disgusted with his own sheepish behaviour during dinner-time, and now bottle valiant from drinking an extra quantity of wine, had made up his mind for a desperate conflict that evening with poor Edith, not with hard blows, but soft words and soft looks; and here was the Captain seated by her side, doing exactly what he had intended doing himself, only in a far more agreeable

manner, and Edith's cheerful smile and beaming eye betokening the pleasure she felt in his society.

To portray Alphonso's rage as that of an exasperated tiger, or a lady bear robbed of her cubs, would be a very faint similitude; he could have stabbed Duncombe to the heart there and then, and torn his body into infinitesimally small pieces through one of his father's cotton mills; but as he glared upon him in his fury, the Captain returned his savage look with one of such thorough pity that Alphonso sprang from the sofa, and retreated quickly to the other end of the room, for he felt almost tempted to stain his Mamma's best satin damask with the Captain's blood.

CHAPTER IX.

THE same individual man undergoes so great a metamorphosis between the hours of nine at night, after a good dinner and plenty of wine, and nine o'clock the next morning, that you would scarcely recognise him as the same character. Many an old fox-hunter who has ridden hard in his time, still rides very hard when seated in his arm-chair after dinner, which requires only a little wider stretch of an already excited imagination to become converted into a saddle, comfortably ensconced in which, he fancies himself again charging gates, post, rails, and double fences, as in the days of his manhood's prime. But what a contrast does he present the next morning, creeping leisurely along to

the covert side, with nerve barely sufficient to ride over a mole-hill!

Such was the case with Shuttleworth, junior. With the fumes of wine, his other fumes had also evaporated, and he descended to the breakfast-room, the morning after his Papa's grand dinner-party, looking the picture of meekness and submission. There sat his enemy (whom he had killed twice over in his dreams of the past night) by the side of his Mamma, quite alive, and as cheerful as ever, who on his entering said, in his usual manner, "Well, Jack, my boy, how do you feel this morning?"

"Pretty well, thank you, Duncombe," was the meek reply, as he quietly took his seat at the lower end of the table.

After breakfast they took their usual stroll together down to the stables, when Alphonso, thinking the Captain's silence on the events of the preceding evening seemed something like a desire to evade any recurrence to an unpleasant matter, in which he had not acted as he ought to have done,

put in a feeler, by saying, "I didn't think, Duncombe, you would have treated a fellow as you did me last night, after what passed between us a month ago, when you advised me to put up for Edith Maxwell."

"I never advised you to do anything of the kind; the question originated with yourself, Master Jack; you said you had a great mind to 'put up for her,' as you call it, or words to that purport, but it does not follow that, because Mr. Shuttleworth, junior, considers himself entitled to 'put up' for Miss Maxwell, other gentlemen are to be put down. By your violent eagerness to seize upon that young lady when dinner was announced, you very nearly put me down, Sir, into her mother's lap; and if there is one thing I abhor more than all others, it is *gaucherie*, or awkwardness, in the presence of ladies. Although not through his own fault, a man making an apology for a thing of this kind looks like an ass; and I felt, when barely saved from being plumped down

like a lubberly boy into Mrs. Maxwell's lap, by your excessive rudeness, just inclined to send you spinning across to the other side of the room, Master Jack, which I rather fancy I could do at any time without any vast amount of trouble; but if you have the least doubt on the subject we can have a trial with the gloves, which are hanging up in your room, just to determine the controversy."

"I did not intend to offend, much less to upset you, Duncombe, last night, and was not aware, until you told me, of pushing you so rudely aside, for which I now make every apology."

"Very well, Jack, it is all right again now; but although I don't care for a little rough-and-ready play or fun amongst men, I don't intend to be made a fool of before women; and to punish you for your rudeness last night, I paid rather more attention to Miss Maxwell than I might otherwise have done."

"Perhaps you have altered your mind, Duncombe, and mean to cut me out alto-

gether, as you did last night, from trying to render myself agreeable to her."

"I always select the prettiest girl in the room to chat with, or flirt with, Jack; this is a failing to which I confess myself very liable — but — yes, then follows the saving clause."

"And what's that, Duncombe?"

"That being tolerably well off as a bachelor I don't contemplate matrimony without a full equivalent, or rather more, with a wife, to compensate for my loss of liberty. And now we may as well throw our legs over our horses' backs, and give them a canter to open their pipes for tomorrow, when we shall have something to do to keep clear of the crowd of horsemen who generally patronise the Marquis at his favourite meet, Scurry gorse. You have not yet tried your new nag, which I named Dickens, after his late owner, and although said to be quiet with the hounds, I won't answer for him, therefore keep clear of the pack, or the Marquis may proffer you a little advice on riding to hounds."

“How very kind of him!” replied Alphonso, “he must be a very good-tempered sort of fellow.”

“I hope you may find him so, Jack; but his lordship’s temper won’t stand hounds being ridden over, so mind what you are about to-morrow.”

We may here, by the way, relate that Duncombe had first become acquainted with the Marquis of Dunkerton, from being in the same regiment with him for three years, and that on his lordship’s leaving the army their acquaintance was still kept up by meeting constantly in the betting ring, at races, and also at the covert side during the hunting season.

The Captain was a clever hand at book-making on turf events, and often let the Marquis in for a good thing, from being well known to the first trainers and jockeys; and in return for little favours of this kind, which had proved most profitable investments to his lordship on several occasions, the Captain received invitations now and then to spend a few days at Dunkerton

Park, to shoot or hunt with the Marquis, who was not only a sportsman in the widest acceptation of the term, but tolerably well acquainted with every other game besides wild game — from billiards downwards, not even disdaining a shy at snuff-boxes.

Duncombe had opened the campaign against the poor pheasants on the first of October at Dunkerton Park, and in the evening, *inter alia*, Shuttleworth, the cotton spinner, was brought up on the board.

“Do you know that confounded fellow?” asked the Marquis, “who, report goes, is killing every fox which gets into his coverts.”

“Yes, Dunkerton, I made a point of calling upon him, just to enlighten him on this subject, — for living between the two hunts he would have done us an infinity of mischief,—and, I am happy to say, my remonstrances have proved effectual. He promised me to discharge every one of his keepers if the hounds again drew his coverts blank.”

“Bravo! Duncombe; this cotton man,

then, cannot be a very bad sort of fellow, notwithstanding all that is said against him. But what of his son?"

"Cubbish, my Lord, decidedly, and rather snobbish; but inclined to disperse the dross quite as fast as Shuttleworth *père* has collected it, when he has the power. I shall try to make something of him."

"Or rather," added the Marquis, with a laugh, "something *out* of him, Duncombe, — eh?"

"Well, between ourselves, I don't intend to turn bear-leader for nothing, and he must pay for my piping; but the old one may be turned to some account, too, by your lordship, as he has more loose cash than he can find investments for."

"Does he bet or play, Duncombe?"

"Neither, I am sorry to say; but the game he is now playing is to get on in the county, to become a country gentleman, magistrate, and deputy-lieutenant — having purchased already every strip of land he could lay hold upon near Hardington. But the old squires vote shy of him. To the

Knightleys he is odious from buying Eger-ton's property. The Maxwells, however, have exchanged cards and dinners with him, for the Colonel dreads his money power, lest he may buy two or three small portions of land intermixed with the Morton Grange estates."

"Maxwell has an only daughter, too," added the Marquis, "and a very pretty one."

"But the Colonel is too proud of his child and his name to wish her to change it for Shuttleworth," rejoined the Captain; "and I believe will make it a condition that his son-in-law, whoever he may be, shall take his daughter's maiden name, instead of her assuming his. But we are now running wide of our line. Shuttleworth, senior, is an ambitious man, he has made more money than he wants, and now wants preferment, having got an idea into his head that he is to be the founder of a great family. All these money-made fellows pretend to despise honours and titles, running down the aristocracy because the

grapes are sour, yet at heart they are as greedy of honours as of money - bags. Shuttleworth aims first at being made a magistrate for the county, then deputy-lieutenant, then member of Parliament, and so on in quick succession until he can get squeezed into the House of Lords. He knows all these things can be done — have been done — and will be done again and again, by money and money's power — interest. He is prepared to pay for his promotion, as every snob must in the army — so, my Lord, you being lord-lieutenant, may make something of the old fox, whilst I handle the cub."

"Well, Duncombe, it might be done perhaps, although at present I don't see my way at all clearly. Of course I could not call upon him, neither would the Marchioness visit the cotton-spinner's wife, or receive her here, — that is quite out of the question."

"Undoubtedly; but with your permission I could introduce the young Shuttlecock to you when regular hunting begins,

for my patronage is conditional on his hunting—and your Lordship might ask him to a shooting party, or something of that sort, and I will manage afterwards about his father.”

“Very well, Duncombe, you may introduce the cub to me when you like; that will save the foxes, and we can talk about the Papa at some future time.”

A month had now elapsed since this conversation; Duncombe, meanwhile, puzzling his head how to effect an introduction between the Marquis and Mr. Shuttleworth, when his mention of the railway project the previous evening suggested itself to the Captain as a *modus operandi*, or means to carry out his object; and with this view he again broached the subject after dinner the next day, by asking what per-centage this railway would be likely to pay.

“On whose account do you make the inquiry, Duncombe?”

“On my own, Sir—I have a few spare hundreds idle at my bankers, but can-

not afford to risk the money in an idle scheme."

"This is no idle scheme, Duncombe, or my name would not be down as one of the directors. It is a sure thing, and the original share-holders will get cent per cent for their money if they wish to sell, even in six months, when we get our bill passed. Our plans and calculations have been made by the most scientific engineers and cleverest men of business, and there can be no doubt as to the issue. You will have to pay only by easy instalments, until the line is opened for traffic, and I will give you an undertaking on paper, to relieve you of the shares you take at my suggestion, any time within twelve months, or twelve years if you like, at cost price. Our line will pass through some part of the Marquis of Dunkerton's property, and if he does not oppose us, I will let him into a good thing or two. You understand—twig—eh?"

"Just so, Sir," replied the Captain; "I will sound the Marquis on this subject the first fitting opportunity; but he won't

listen to politics, statistics, or money matters in the hunting field."

. The next day, their hunters being sent forward, the Captain drove up to the place of meeting with his *protégé* in his mail phaeton, drawn by a pair of well-bred horses, the turn-out under Duncombe's direction being quite the thing, neither overdone nor underdone, and though stylish and neat, without that superfluity of hieroglyphics on the panels of the carriage, meant to represent family arms—or that gorgeous display of plate on the harness by which a *novus homo* thinks to attract the public eye, as demonstrative of his importance.

The Marquis had already arrived, and was sitting on his hunter, surrounded by the pack selected for that day's work, talking to Sir Digby Colville, a young baronet of good family, and a great friend of the Marquis, who had been invited down by him to stay as long as he found it agreeable at Dunkerton. Sir Digby Colville was not a person to pass unobserved, even in the greatest crowd, at the most fashionable

réunion in London, being of commanding stature, with remarkably handsome features, and particularly aristocratic in appearance and manners.

“What a pity it is,” observed the Dowager Lady Grumbleton to another anxious Mamma of three grown-up daughters, with one of whom he had been dancing the preceding season at Almacks, “what a pity it is that Sir Digby is so poor!”

“Poor!” exclaimed the Countess of C—— in surprise, “he has been represented to me as having his clear ten thousand a-year at least.”

“His father was reported to have had that income in Irish property, my dear,” replied the Dowager Lady Grumbleton, “but we all know that these Irish properties of ten thousand a-year mean about a third of that sum, collectable from moor-land and potato-field farmers, which, in unfavourable seasons, is not collectable at all. Poor fellow! he is very good-looking certainly, —very agreeable, quite one of us in appearance and manners, my dear,” with a

sarcastic smile ; “ but as a moneyed investment by no means a desirable *parti* for one of your daughters—in short, I am told, on reliable authority, that his present income does not exceed one thousand a-year.”

This short dialogue may suffice to show the position of Sir Digby Colville at the close of the last London season, who gladly availed himself of his friend Dunkerton’s invitation to spend a few weeks with him in the country. The Baronet kept his cab horse and park hack when in town, and possessed also three or four clever Irish hunters, well bred, and equal to carry his weight (over fourteen stone) with the fastest foxhounds, which, having had their usual summer’s run in the park at his old family place in the Emerald Isle, had now arrived at Dunkerton in anticipation of a few good days with the Marquis, when they might be turned to a good account. Sir Digby, now in his thirtieth year, having sown his wild oats during his father’s lifetime, had, upon succeeding to the title and estates three years previously, found it ne-

cessary to turn over a new leaf, and commence on its blank page a short ledger account of his incomings and outgoings; in fact he found it imperative upon him to look to his P's and Q's for the future, for with his father's incumbrances on the property, in which he had been a participator to pay his own debts also, the income on which he could rely barely amounted to one thousand per annum. He had, however, acquired sufficient worldly wisdom to understand the wide distinction between being poor and appearing poor; and he knew that by appearing poor he might become a really poor man for the residue of his days.

A poor gentleman, to make his way in the world by any means, has great difficulty, for almost every man is against him; all ask the question—what is he fit for, not having been brought up to any business or profession? The trade will have nothing to say to him—he does not write well enough even for a lawyer's copying clerk, and if he did, they could not insult a

gentleman by offering him such a low salary ; all ears are closed against him, unless, through some influential friend, he may find that of a leading man in office open to assist him in some subordinate situation ; failing that, he must work for his bread by hand or head—rob or starve.

A poor lord or baronet stands in a more awkward predicament, without superior talents and interest in high places to advance him. Sir Digby Colville had not passed through London life without being convinced of this fact ; and he had also discovered another, that from his neglected education he was unfitted for any official appointment, could he have procured it. But he was fully appreciated by the fair sex, even dowager duchesses patronising him. To the ladies, therefore, he looked for assistance and advancement ; he had a title, with a handsome person, to bestow on any young lady who possessed an equivalent in money.

Sir Digby, unlike Irishmen generally, had become a tolerably prudent man, yet

he was not strictly of Irish blood, his mother having been a Scotchwoman. Three months of the year, during the height of the season, were spent by him in London, where, from his good connections, he had obtained an entrée into the first society; and as a set-off against his extra expenditure at that time, he was compelled to economise for the remaining nine, either at his old place, or by visiting his friends. On the first of August he made it a rule to leave London for grouse-shooting, which meant simply to keep a watch over an English party to whom he had let his moors with a limitation as to the number of birds to be killed annually.

These gentlemen were also boarded by him during the season at so much per head weekly, their host always presiding at the dinner-table—the second course, of grouse or game, being conditionally supplied by themselves; so that the Baronet realised more by letting his shootings and furnished apartments to single men than by the letting of his moor-land to bad-paying tenants. Being

also a good judge of horses, he always picked up every autumn three or four well-bred, young, weight-carrying hunters, with which he set sail, about the end of October, for some friend's house in England, where he had only to provide provender for them and his groom, the cost of which the sale of one of his stud proved generally sufficient to cover; buying at about thirty pounds, and sometimes selling for three hundred; for one horse, which cost him only thirty-five pounds, having actually pocketed five hundred; and the horse was said to be worth all the money, possessing great speed with immense power.

In short the Baronet had become a first-rate manager in all these matters, and being a very agreeable, entertaining companion, his society was rather eagerly sought after; he had also the good sense to keep his own counsel, so that few knew his true circumstances, and none suspected him of being on the look-out for a rich wife, the general impression amongst his friends and acquaintances being that Sir Digby Colville was not a marrying man.

This little digression anent the Baronet has led us somewhat wide of the scene with the Marquis of Dunkerton's fox-hounds, to which, on now returning, we find the Captain, after emerging from sundry wrappers and a large top garment, and alighting from Alphonso's drag, approaching *on foot*; for that day, riding *a kicker*, he knew this was his only safe mode of approach to the royal presence of the Master when surrounded by his spangled favourites.

"Ah! Duncombe," exclaimed the Marquis, appreciating his caution, "how do?—glad to see you out with us again. You had a good thing, I am told, with Knightley on the first."

"Pretty well, my lord; your hounds are in splendid condition, never saw them look quite so well before; old Chorister seems in tip-top trim," as he patted the old hound's head; when, laying his hand on the neck of the Marquis's horse, he said, "A word for your ear only, Dunkerton," to whom, on bending his head, the Captain whispered, "I've brought the cub out—shall

I introduce him now, or some other time ?”

“Now,” was the reply, “and as we shoot to-morrow, bring him over, with your guns, and dine; the Marchioness is from home.”

Alphonso was accordingly produced, presented in due form, and complimented by the Marquis on becoming a fox-hunter; in return for which our hero expressed his approval of the pack by remarking, “Your lordship has a splendid lot of dogs out to-day.”

“Pretty fair,” was the reply; “but you must see the ladies.”

“Shall feel proud, my lord, to have the honour of an introduction to your lordship’s family,” replied Alphonso, very innocently.

“What a muff!” muttered Sir Digby. “Come, Dunkerton, let us be moving, we shall lose the best part of the day in coffee-housing this fine morning. Who’s your new friend?” as they walked their horses away.

“A young cotton-spinner, Digby, whose father has lately purchased a large tract of land and wood in my Hunt; and therefore, to save the foxes, I must patronise the cub; one of the privileges peculiar to a Master of fox-hounds being that he must know every man in his own county who owns a hedge-row.”

Meanwhile Duncombe had mounted his hunter, keeping with Alphonso at a respectful distance behind the hounds, until they were lost to sight by being buried in the thick gorse covert. For a few moments nothing was heard save the shrill voice of the noble huntsman; then a half-stifled note of old Chorister from beneath the tangled covert, which begins to wave and shake.

“Have at him, old boy!” cries the Master; and, in a few seconds more, the forms of the spangled pack are seen leaping and jumping here and there, hurrying to join their old leader. A screech from Dick at the further end is heard.

“Away!” screams the noble huntsman.

“By gad, he’s off!” and with a few short, thrilling blasts of the horn, which set the whole field of two hundred horsemen in motion, the Marquis bounds away at the head of the cavalcade. Alphonso is torn along by his impatient steed right through the throng; knocking against one here, another there, with shouts ringing in his ear:—“Hey, you tailor! where are you going to?” “Holloa, you Sir, on the brown horse, you have nearly broken my leg!” But our hero, regardless of reproof, held on his course. A gate is before him, which an obsequious farmer is trying to open for the Marquis. Dickens will have it; knocking the farmer off his horse, and sending the rails flying, as he bursts through the timber in his furious career.

The hounds are straining away across the next field; in another minute he is alongside of Bill, the first whipper-in. Crash goes Dickens through a stiff black-thorn hedge, with his hind legs in the off ditch, which caused Alphonso a bloody

nose, from the horse throwing back his head.

“Never mind, Jack,” cried a familiar voice, “pick him up, and come along.”

Jack would willingly have declined the invitation, but Dickens *would* go along; besides which, his rider, thinking his honour at stake, to keep his place with the hounds of the Marquis, as he had with Mr. Knightley's, pocketed the affront of the bloody nose, and again set forward at full speed, crashing and rasping through all opposing fences — his horse being what is called a rusher — until he found himself going slap through the pack—which had come to a sudden check from the fox being headed by a ploughman—amidst a volley of anathemas hurled at his head by the enraged Marquis; of which, apparently wholly unconscious, Alphonso kept on his career until he was brought to anchor in a deep brook below, by his horse swerving at the brink, thereby sending his master flying over his head into the stream.

“He'll be drowned, my lord,” exclaimed

one gentleman, more compassionate than the others.

“He may be drowned, and be d—d,” replied the Marquis, “for all I care; a confounded snob! but, hark! there’s a halloo forward.” And away he went with the hounds, which were quickly on the line again, leaving our hero to his fate, which, however, was not to be drowned that day; for he was soon seen crawling up the bank, which satisfied the Captain, without going down to his assistance, that no damage had been sustained by his friend, save a ducking; and, as the hounds were going in a different direction, he was left to catch his horse as he could.

CHAPTER X.

It took Alphonso much longer time to catch his horse than it did me to write my last long chapter. He went, churning the water in his boots over several fields, until he found his runaway steed in the hands of a stout farmer, by whom he had been captured whilst attempting to walk through one of his gates, a little too stiff to be broken, and hitched up by his bridle to the post. It is almost superfluous to add that, after tendering the farmer a sovereign for catching the runaway, our hero felt in no humour to continue the chase that day, with the shouts and execrations of the Marquis still ringing in his ears; and he accordingly inquired the nearest road home, which he reached, exceed-

ingly disgusted with the figure he had cut, by having his handkerchief bound round his head *al Turco*, in place of his best beaver, which, e'er that time, the eels had nestled in at the bottom of the brook.

Having had a good run, and killing their fox at the end of it, the Marquis had forgotten all about Alphonso's riding through his pack — fortunately, without injuring a hound ; and Duncombe returned by dinner-time to Hardington, also in high spirits, and began rallying Alphonso on his Quixotic exploits.

“Egad, Jack, you astonished the Marquis not a little by going slap-bang through his pack, and then performing that pirouette into the brook.”

“The Marquis astonished me a great deal more by using such abusive language,” replied Alphonso, in a sulky tone ; “I won't stand that from any man.”

“Then you must sit it, like other fellows. Why, Sir, he has anathematised me up hill and down dale for riding *with* his hounds, when he couldn't catch me,

not for riding *over* them, as you did, smashing two couples of his favourites right and left. Egad, Sir! that was enough to make any huntsman savage; but he is all right again now, and asked me to bring you over to-morrow, to shoot and dine with him."

"Did he, indeed, Duncombe?"

"Yes, to be sure he did; so now I'll tell you what to do. That devil you bought of Dickens is a rushing, tearing brute, and wants a riding-master on his back, so you offer him to the Marquis for his whipper-in, to ride during the season, and he will make a hunter of him. This will please the Marquis and save your neck, my boy, for he will kill you; but he won't attempt running away with Bill after one or two trials; and, at the end of the season, he will be worth a mint of money—very nearly thorough-bred, and up to fifteen stone; that's the way to do business, Jack,—so now let us go for dinner, as I feel uncommonly peckish."

The invitation to shoot and dine with

the Marquis the next day put Alphonso into good spirits, as well as his Papa and Mamma, for the remainder of the evening.

“Well, really Captain, dear,” exclaimed the latter, “our John ought to feel so much obliged to you for introducing him to the Marquis; and I begin to think this hunting will make a man of him at last; but, my gracious! what a figure he came home, and so out of temper, I couldn’t think what had happened!”

“Just a dip in the brook, my dear Madam—save a shower-bath—do him all the good in the world. Cold water is the finest thing ever invented for all sorts of complaints,—cure a runaway horse, won’t it, Jack?—stop him at least, for a time. I have heard it spoken of also as a certain remedy in heart complaints,” with a meaning look at his friend Jack. “There is an uncommon nice-looking piece of water at Morton Grange, in which Thomas, the footman, tried the experiment of seeing how much he could swallow without being choked.”

“La, what a silly man, Captain!” Mrs. Shuttleworth said; “what made him do that?”

“Why, they say the lady’s maid made him do it. Thomas must needs fall desperately in love with this young person, who is nearly as pretty as her young mistress; but Arabella Tomkins, not favouring his suit, seeing that she preferred a handsome farmer, Thomas declared his intention of drowning himself, at which all the domestics raised such a laugh, that the excited footman rushed out of the servants’ hall in a frenzy, without his hat, exclaiming,—

“‘I’ll do it! I’ll do it!’

“‘No, you won’t,’ said Harry, the groom, ‘I knows you harn’t got the pluck to do it, so I’ll go and see fair play.’

“‘Oh! Harry,’ cried the cook, ‘do ye stop him,’ as Thomas was seen running towards the pond. ‘Oh! dear, I’ll go myself,’ and away bundled the cook in full chase, followed by the scullion girl and housemaid, all three screaming ‘murder!’

but ere they could overtake him, Thomas had plunged into the water up to his neck, not caring to go further, where he stood like a hunted stag at bay, with the women screaming on the bank. How long this farce might have lasted it would be difficult to say, or to what further lengths or depths Mr. Thomas might have gone, had not the Colonel, hearing the cries of the women, reached the place, who, on learning the cause of all this outcry, threatened his delinquent servant with instant dismissal, and a situation in the county jail or lunatic asylum for attempting self-destruction, unless he immediately came out.

“It would seem,” continued the Captain, “that the household at Morton Grange is composed of very inflammable matter, inasmuch as a fortnight after this little incident had occurred the cook was found going off into hysterics, sobbing and crying, ‘Oh, I’ve done it! I’ve done it!’”

“‘Done what?’ asked the scullion girl.

“‘Oh! that bottle in Thomas’s pantry,’

replied the cook, sinking back in a chair.

“ ‘Mercy on us!’ exclaimed Mary, rushing into the pantry, where a bottle stood on the table labelled ‘poison;’ ‘if she hasn’t been drinking the boot-top stuff!’ And up ran Mary, without hesitation, to the drawing-room, consternation depicted in her face, telling her mistress the cook had just poisoned herself by swallowing half a bottle of oxalic acid.

“ ‘Confound the woman!’ muttered the Colonel, springing up from his chair. ‘Another love affair, I conclude. These servants of mine will drive me distracted. Where’s Thomas?’

“ ‘Gone with my young lady to Woodborough,’ replied Mary.

“ ‘Then run to the stable-yard, and tell William to go instantly for the doctor, and send the butler to me directly.’

“ ‘He’s holding the cook, Sir, who’s gone off into strikes.’

“ ‘Hang the fool!’ exclaimed the Colonel, impatiently; ‘there, get away;’ and he

stalked hastily into his own room; and, after mixing up a large tumbler of prepared chalk-and-water, he descended to the kitchen, where he found every female domestic of his establishment gathered round the cook, wringing their hands, with loud lamentations at her untimely fate.

“‘Oh, poor thing! she’ll die; nothing can save her;’ ‘Oh, lauks, how dreadful!’ &c.

“‘Hold your chatter!’ shouted the excited Colonel; ‘and you, Markham, make that fool of a woman drink this tumbler of mixture. Down with it, you idiot!’ cried the Colonel, as the cook cast an imploring look towards her master’s face.

“‘It is your only chance; drink it, or die;’ and down it went, for cooky had now been awakened to her awful position; and the doctor, arriving soon after, followed the Colonel’s draught with emetics and other poison neutralisers, which saved, as Bill termed it, ‘the crowner’s ’quest’ that time; and as there appears to be a good deal of *low* fever about Morton Grange, I advise Jack to keep aloof from it.”

“ Well, I’m sure, Miss Edith is a love of a girl, and I wish our John would take a fancy to her.”

“ Don’t talk such nonsense, Mother, pray,” interposed Alphonso, blushing up to his ears.

“ I call it the most sensible thing you could do, John,” replied his Mamma ; “ and, as I tell Papa, I want a daughter-in-law to keep me company in this large house. Why, lauks! there is room enough in it, and to spare, for three good families ; and that range of rooms, at the end of the long gallery, just the thing for a nursery.”

“ There, Mother, that will do,” said Alphonso, becoming impatient of further remarks on this tender subject.

The shooting party at the Marquis’s came off the next day without any incident occurring worthy of note, save that our hero mistook the head of one of the beaters for a woodcock, but by bobbing his own, and shutting his eyes at the moment of pulling the trigger, the charge went over the man’s hat, without inflicting any serious

wounds, two or three stray shots only lodging in his thick cranium, to heal which, in place of lip-salve, Alphonso proffered a golden ointment, as a sovereign remedy in such slight cases.

The Marchioness being from home, there was only a small male party at dinner that evening; after which Alphonso, when *plenus Bacchi*, said, "I regret, my lord, exceedingly, having caused such confusion amongst your dogs yesterday, but the fact was, my lord, the brute I was riding ran away with me; and if your lordship will do me the favour to accept that horse for one of your servants, he is quite at your service. He cost me two hundred guineas, and Duncombe says he will make a splendid hunter, being only five years old."

"I am much obliged by your polite offer, Mr. Shuttleworth, but I cannot think of depriving you of so valuable a horse. My whipper-in, Bill, shall, however, try what he can do with him for you, if you like to send him over to our stables; and when steady with hounds, he shall be returned."

“As you please, my lord, but I don't care about riding him again, and hope your lordship will keep him, if he suits.”

“I wish Mr. Shuttleworth would make me that offer, Dunkerton,” added Sir Digby Colville; “that brown horse will be worth three hundred, with a month's careful handling across country.”

“So much the better for Mr. Shuttleworth, then, Colville, for I think Bill a likely fellow to cure him of his runaway propensity.”

“Cool fellow that,” interposed Duncombe. “What do you think he did the other day?”

“Rode at a plough-team, perhaps, if in his line,” said the Marquis.

“No; but I saw him going down-hill full gallop, over rough ground, with the reins loose about his horse's neck, the handle of his open pocket-knife between his teeth, both hands being occupied in tying a lash on to his whip; and, to make the act more daring, the horse he rode was a speedy cutter, with very shaky fore-legs.”

“ Well, Sir,” remarked Sir Digby, “ Tom Smith’s riding for a fall is milk-and-water to Bill’s audacity ; but I suppose his neck is insured from everything but a halter.”

Later in the evening, cards being introduced, Alphonso found himself facing his friend, the Captain, and Sir Digby opposite the Marquis, at a quiet game of whist, just to pass the time. The five-shilling points seemed rather high to our hero, who had never gone beyond one under the paternal tree ; but of course a Marquis would not play for such a trifling sum—he could not expect it in aristocratic circles ; and as his partner, the Captain, swept off the winnings from the two first rubbers, Alphonso thought it very good fun.

“ You are in luck to-night, Duncombe,” remarked the Marquis ; “ I can’t afford to lose much more money.”

“ Oh! never mind, my lord, luck will change over to your side now, for fortune is a very fickle dame. What say you to golden, instead of silver points ?—it will save my carrying home all these small

coins jingling in my pocket. I shall be accused of robbing the toll-keeper."

"As you please," replied the Marquis, with a laugh; "guinea points, if you like."

The third rubber fell to the Captain, who, on collecting the sovereigns, said, "Ah! these yellow boys are much prettier things to handle; but whist-playing is dry, thirsty work; will your lordship favour us with a tankard of mulled claret?"

"Pull the bell, Duncombe," was the reply; and on the butler entering, the tankard, brandy, and champagne were ordered to be placed on a side table, near them.

The game continued; and as the wine and spirits went down, other false spirits arose, which tempted Alphonso to exhibit his contempt for money by offering to treble the stakes when the luck had gone over to the other side. The tankard and brandy-bottle had been replenished three times, when the Captain, thinking enough had been done for one sitting, rose from the table, exclaiming, "By Jove! Jack, it is past one o'clock; we must be trudging."

“Oh! never mind the time, Duncombe; George will sit up for us till five in the morning.”

“Very likely; but you seem to forget the Marquis hunts again to-morrow. So now, you settle your reckoning with Sir Digby, and I will do the same with my lord.”

On squaring accounts, Alphonso and the Captain were down on the debtor side to the amount of one hundred and fifty each, so deep had they been playing; when the Captain said,—

“Well, my lord, the tables are turned in good earnest against us; and as I have not my cheque-book, I must beg the favour of pen and paper to write you a draft on my bankers.”

This being readily supplied, Alphonso availed himself also of the same mode of discharging his obligations to the Baronet. A smile passed over the features of the Marquis on reading Duncombe’s autography, which was immediately transferred to his pocket without any remark; and their

carriage being in waiting, the Captain and his chum shook hands with the Marquis, who said he hoped to see them out the next day with his hounds.

“Doubtful, my lord — can’t promise;” but in an *aside*, as he was leaving the room, “that cub has had brandy-and-water enough to keep him in bed till twelve o’clock to-morrow. Good night, my lord.”

After they were gone, Sir Digby said, “That youngster bleeds freely, Dunkerton, — I suppose it’s all right with this slip of paper he has given me? How do you stand with the Captain?”

“Thus,” replied the Marquis, handing him Duncombe’s cheque, on which was written,—

“Messrs. Knockemoff & Co.,

“Please pay the Marquis of Dunkerton one hundred and fifty bob.

“J. DUNCOMBE.”

“Egad! Dunkerton,” remarked his friend, “this is the most curious little document, in the shape of a draft, which has ever come

under my inspection; but I suppose you know your man, and the Messrs. Knockem-off, his bankers?"

"I have never heard of any such firm," was the reply; "but Duncombe told me, before sitting down to cards, that if he lost he could not pay — so throw the paper into the fire."

"Well, Dunkerton, in that case you must of course share my profits; that is, if £ s. d. come out of the paper I hold — perhaps that is a hoax, too."

"Oh no, Digby, you will find that right enough when you take it into Waterton the day after to-morrow."

"Why not to-morrow?"

"We hunt to-morrow; and to present his draft so soon would show distrust of the man, or too much eagerness for his money; so now I must say good night."

The following morning Alphonso awoke about ten o'clock with a splitting headache, and great craving for soda-water, three bottles of which he had already emptied when Duncombe entered his room.

“Why, Jack! in bed still; when do you mean to turn out?”

“Can’t say exactly, Duncombe—feel very queer this morning; sitting up so late does not suit my book, and that mulled wine has given me a terrible headache.”

“Well, you did not spare the liquids, Jack; a quart of spiced wine, with a pint and a half of brandy to your own share, was not much amiss to finish off with, after a bottle of champagne, ditto claret, ditto port, at and after dinner, besides liqueurs. You drew upon the Marquis’s cellar pretty well for the first set to.”

“And I have an idea,” replied Alphonso, “that his lordship drew pretty heavily on my pocket.”

“You made a fool of yourself and me too, Master Jack, in that matter, by insisting at last on five-guinea points, and fifty the rubber.”

“Did I? by Jove! Duncombe—’pon honour?”

“Yes, you did, you arrant donkey, when you could not tell the queen of hearts from

the knave of diamonds ; and if it had not been for the Marquis stopping you, you would have made it fifty-guinea points, and five hundred the rubber. This may suit your banker's book, my fine fellow, but it don't suit mine ; and your foolery last night has put me on the wrong side of the ledger."

"I am sorry for it, Duncombe ; but you shall not suffer for my folly. I'll make it good to you in a day or two ; but I must not draw too heavily just now, or the governor will stop the supplies. Of course you won't say anything about card-playing last night ?"

"Certainly not, Jack ; so now I must say good-bye for the present, having business to attend to at home."

CHAPTER XI.

CAPTAIN DUNCOMBE was well received at Morton Grange, for there is a kind of brotherhood amongst military men which draws them together. He was also a good listener, apparently never tired of hearing the Colonel's often-told tales and exploits, and always treating his host with the most deferential respect; in fact the Captain became as great a favourite with the master as with the mistress of the house. Neither were his visits, as we have stated, irksome to the young lady; and as St. Austin's lay only three miles distant from Morton Grange, the latter was made the half-way house between that and Hardington, where he called generally two or three times a week to retail any scraps of news he might

chance to pick up in the hunting field or elsewhere. Elderly gentlemen, as well as old ladies, although they may appear to disregard it, are not averse to a little scandal about their neighbours, and the Colonel enjoyed a bit of gossip over his wine, with which he was supplied by the Captain.

“Grand affair, that dinner party at Hardington,” he remarked, two evenings after, when *tête-à-tête* with the Colonel, sipping his claret; “but the report is, that Shuttleworth is going a deal too fast for his money, verifying the old adage of ‘light come, light go.’ The building and finishing of that new house has cost him a mint of money; and then look at his plate, absurdly magnificent for a man in his position — at least thirty thousand pounds sunk there. A friend of his, I met there last week from Manchester, said to me, with a shrug of his shoulders, “Our host has had luck on his side hitherto, but a fall in the cotton market, which we are now expecting, will play old gooseberry with his paper currency.”

“I understood, Duncombe, that he had realised his money, and ceased business altogether.”

“Oh, no, my dear Sir, not so; he has lots of paper afloat still, and an agent in Manchester who transacts business for him; so that some fine day a crash may take place at Hardington, for these speculating fellows, with so many irons in the fire, generally burn their fingers at last.”

“Why, Edmund Knightley told me he offered to buy St. Austin’s of his trustees, for his eldest son.”

“A mere flash in the pan, Colonel; there was no charge in that barrel; just a little puff, to show his consequence, and make people believe the report of his immense wealth. This Manchester friend of his told me he had not paid for his plate yet, at least, not more than half of it. ‘Come, come,’ I said, ‘that won’t do,’ wishing to fish out the truth. ‘But it will, and must do,’ he replied, ‘and I think I ought to know, as I am his jeweller, and came over to get the rest of my money.’ ‘Which of

course he has paid,' I said. 'Thus, Captain, by a bill at six months,' showing me the document. So, my dear Sir, you may perceive there is a great deal of tinsel about this cotton lord."

"Well, well, Duncombe, I'm not sorry to hear this — pass the bottle — for to tell you the truth, I began to fear this man would overpower us all with his money bags, and buy up every strip of land he could purchase."

"He has bought more than he can pay for already, Colonel; and, I am told, has not yet the title-deeds of Hardington in his possession, having paid only two-thirds of the money, and the lawyers hold the mortgage."

"Then the son is not of course quite out of the fire yet, that is, independent of his father's speculations?"

"Oh, no; quite the reverse — nothing of his own — not at all a safe investment."

"By the way, Duncombe, talking of investments, I must buy something for Edith to ride; her pony is old and broken-winded, and I want one a trifle higher on the leg

for her now, she has grown so tall; about fifteen hands, not over, just to keep her habit clear of the dust; quiet and gentle, with a good mouth, for she is not much of a horsewoman — rather timid, Duncombe, you understand?”

“Exactly, my dear Sir, and I know the very thing to suit her; a beautiful bay, with four black legs, Arab built, handsome as a picture, and has carried Farmer Tomkins’s daughter the last six months; gentle as a lamb, and steady as a pack-horse, rising six years old, and warranted all right.”

“Well, well, but the price, Duncombe?”

“They are asking thirty-five guineas; and although cheap as dirt at the figure, for a park-hack, I make no doubt I could get him for thirty pounds. But I will ride him over to-morrow morning, and you can judge for yourself — put the side saddle on his back, and let Miss Maxwell try him.”

The following day, about eleven o’clock, the Captain made his appearance at Morton Grange, mounted on the aforesaid nag, whose paces he exhibited to great effect

before the Colonel and the ladies, who expressed their admiration of his appearance and movements. He was then taken to the stables for an exchange of saddles, and being well dressed over was again brought round to the hall door, with the Colonel's cob, and the servant's horse for Captain Duncombe, who, from long experience with his sisters, vaulted Edith upon the back of the nag with the ease and precision known only to experienced hands in such matters, at the same time adjusting her habit with the air and importance of a riding-master. In this little movement the Captain displayed a good deal of taste as well as coquetry. The little foot was inserted in the stirrup with a gentle squeeze of his hand, which seemed to linger about it rather longer than necessary; then a little bit of the habit must be added, to keep the skirt in its proper place, which gave occasion for another pressure of the hand, and an upturned, inquiring look at the fair equestrian, which caused a slightly heightened colour; but there was a serious expression

upon her face, which told the Captain that his attentions to her foot might have been dispensed with. She did not wait to hear a very pretty compliment as to her seat and figure, just issuing from his lips as she moved forward to the side of her father, where she remained during their ride; and upon their return home, she sprang from her saddle before the Captain could render his offers of assistance.

“Well, Duncombe,” the Colonel said, “I think he will do; and both Edith and myself feel much obliged by your kindness in bringing the horse over for our inspection. We must, however, I fear, give you a little further trouble, in concluding the bargain for us.”

“Not the least trouble, my dear Sir, I will ride the horse back to Farmer Tomkins, make the best deal I can, and return with him here again as soon as possible.”

“And I hope dine with us this evening,” the Colonel added.

Farmer Tomkins was standing at his barn door, hands in pockets, watching the

threshers, apparently not in the best of humours, when the Captain rode up to his homestead.

“You ha’e gied that young hoss a pretty good spanking this morning,” he said, turning round to Duncombe, “and knows his paces by this time, I reckon.”

“Come, Tomkins, you needn’t be grumpy because the beans don’t yield so well as you expected ; the extra price will make up for the loss in the measure.”

“I warn’t thinking about the bains, Captain ; but Jack bain’t at home to dress the hoss down after the wisking he ha’e had, all covered wi’ dirt and lather.”

“He is sadly out of condition, Farmer, for I gave him only a bit of a canter across your twenty-acre field, and at the end he came out as white as a sheet ; but there, that don’t signify, if we can agree as to the figure.”

“I told you afore you had un out that I wouldn’t ha’e un galloped about the country, because he were not in condition, and you’ve been on his back this four hours.”

“I never buy without a fair trial, Farmer Tomkins, and that you know, so if we are to do business, name your price, for I’ve got other fish to fry this afternoon, which won’t admit of much haggling about your nag.”

“I wants forty guineas for that young hoss, Captain, and he is worth every shilling of the money.”

“I can buy as smart a hack as that, Farmer, any day of the week for twenty-five pounds, and quite thorough-bred into the bargain; besides, you asked only thirty-five at Barton fair, and could get no offer above thirty. I’ve got three tens in my pocket, and you may have that, or the horse back, as you like.”

“Won’t do, Sir. I’ll have t’other five, or you put un in the stable.” And Farmer Tomkins buttoned up his breeches’ pockets with the air of a man who had made up his mind, and turned again to look at the threshers.

Duncombe saw he was determined now, so he said, “Well, Tomkins, you are a

hard man at a deal, but if you'll throw in a bag of beans I'll take the horse."

"Well, Captain, as we ha'e had dealings afore, I won't stick at a bag o' bains;" and thus, the matter being adjusted, the money was paid, and the Captain returned with his purchase to Morton Grange, soliloquising thus, as he rode leisurely along: "A bad morning's work for me; no plunder out of this deal, but it may turn out well in the end. I told the Colonel I could get him for thirty, and that must stand, so I am four pounds out of pocket; and yet, as there is every prospect of my getting on with the young lady, it is not quite a fool's bargain. She's a ticklish filly to handle, however, starts and springs aside from the touch of my hand, like a three-year old; but I think I've got the cavesson on now, and by giving her her head for a while, she will come up to the halter quiet enough, after a little more coaxing; and when once I've got the ring on, she won't toss her head again, I'll engage. Mettlesome young things,

when well broken in, generally prove the most steady and manageable."

Thus reasoned Captain Duncombe, about whose delicacy of sentiment we need make no remark; but such was the man, and such his ideas about women. I do not draw from my own imagination, but endeavour to represent realities, and whether handsome or plain, interesting or the reverse, amiable or repulsive, they are true to the life. I don't attempt to paint snub noses as aquiline; sallow faces pink and white, or crooked figures straight; and the Captain, although possessing great taste in dress, and well practised in the conventionalities of polished society, borrowed many of his ideas from the stable.

That evening Edith was in high spirits, being greatly pleased with her new horse, and that pleasure was greatly enhanced by her father's promise of giving her pony a run for life; for she was not the girl to neglect old friends for the sake of new. She also felt much obliged to Duncombe, and expressed her thanks in such graceful and

grateful terms as to confirm his previous impressions of her preference for himself above all other men in that locality; and he indulged a silent laugh at the pretensions of his friend Alphonso.

The Colonel, upon the strength of the new purchase, which afforded him great satisfaction, ordered an extra bottle of claret after dinner, for the Captain and himself to discuss, and then proposed joining the ladies in the drawing-room; where, sitting in his snug arm-chair near the fire, he became very soon so deeply engrossed with the contents of a new Agricultural Magazine as to pay little attention to anyone or anything else. Mrs. Maxwell had also taken in hand a piece of work as his *vis-à-vis*, whilst the Captain and Edith were engaged at the piano, the latter playing and singing alternately, as requested by her mother and companion.

Even in the presence of papas and mammas a quiet little flirtation may be carried on with great effect, by two young persons, before this instrument, when there

is no third one to interrupt their harmony. During the intervals between song and air, the lady is apparently searching for a new piece of music through her manifold scraps and books, which somehow or other are always mixed together in the most careless and provoking manner ; and pending this search, her left hand still lingers upon the keys, to drown any sweet notes of her companion's voice which may be uttered above a whisper.

The Captain, anxious to know Edith's opinion of his *protégé*, asked, "What do you think of young Shuttleworth?"

"I really never think about him," she said, carelessly.

"That is very ungrateful towards one who thinks so often and deeply about you, and says so many sweet things in your praise."

"By sweet, you mean silly things, I suppose, since I have scarcely ever heard him make a sensible remark."

"It is not considered a proof of folly to speak in rapturous terms of those who are entitled to our highest admiration."

“When admiration passes the limits of moderation it becomes ridiculous.”

“Then you are not of an enthusiastic nature, and do not approve of such feelings in others?”

“People are often led astray by such feelings, which are frequently the result of a too fanciful imagination.”

“Then, however much I may admire, I am not permitted to express the extent to which my admiration is carried by the contemplation of the most lovely form I have ever beheld?”

“Barefaced compliments are not very agreeable, even to the most weak comprehension ——”

“Even when truly expressed, and as truly felt?” the Captain added.

“No,” she said, “truisms sometimes are not palatable, and in this case vanity itself might feel outraged by too open flattery.”

“Well then, I must show by sighs and looks, and outward signs, the deep admiration I have long felt for ——”

“Edith, my dear,” exclaimed Mrs. Maxwell, “your tea will be quite cold — pray come and take it.”

Edith rose quickly from her seat, and the Captain was prevented from finishing his sentence; nor did she afford him an opportunity of renewing any further private conversation with her that evening. With the intuitive perception natural to her sex, Edith guessed the climax to which the Captain was advancing, and she felt relieved by her mother’s interruption, which prevented the necessity of her refusing him; for although not in the least disposed to encourage his addresses as a lover, she had no desire to offend him, or lose him as an acquaintance. Moreover, he had always appeared much too light-hearted and gay to fall in love with anyone; much less did she expect he had ever entertained any serious thoughts about herself; until that evening, his manner and conversation had never impressed her with the idea that he possessed any depth of feeling, and even were he to propose, she had

resolved to laugh it off, as proceeding from a mere fanciful imagination of his brain, rather than from any strong affection of the heart. She had, however, decided in her mind to treat him for the future with more reserve, and avoid giving him another opportunity for renewing the subject.

CHAPTER XII.

I MUST now ask the courteous reader of these pages to travel with me in imagination to the ancient university of Oxford, where, in an old-fashioned, oblong room, dull and gloomy, at one end of which is a range of fixed seats or benches, rising from the floor gradually almost to the ceiling, we shall find Edmund Knightley, seated at a long table in the centre, covered with books and writing materials. There are some half dozen other young men, occupied with pens and paper, at the same table — and one standing, book in hand, to whom a gentleman in a long gown, with a square cap on his head, is addressing some remarks.

“ A little slower, if you please, Mr. Fitz-
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patrick — that will do, Sir,— now will you render it into English?” which the young man essayed to do, with a very strong Irish brogue, and at a very rapid rate.

“Really, Mr. Fitzpatrick,” exclaimed the examiner, “I cannot follow you, neither do I understand the Irish language.”

“Sure, it is jist me own mither tongue, Sir, and the manner in which I have been accustomed at school to rinder it.”

“Well, Sir, you are indeed rending Horace into figments and fractions; we require a literal translation of the Latin into the English language. You compress whole sentences together.”

“Thin, it’s jist nonsense I’ll make of it the other way,” replied Pat, beginning to construe every word singly and literally, as thus :—

Quid, what, *agis*, do you do, *dulcissime*, most sweet or dear, *rerum*, of things?—“Be the powers, now, is that the way to address a friend in the street on

shaking hands with him? and isn't me version the natural and correct one?—'How di do, my jewel?'"

Roars of laughter from the gallery, which completely upset the gravity even of the examiners.

Pat proceeds; *Suaviter*, sweetly,—“That's not so bad,”—*ut*, as, *nunc*, now, *est*, it is, *inquam*, I say;—“and mane it too, that's cutting the language into smithereens,”—*et*, and, *cupio*, I desire, *omnia*, all things, *quæ*, which, *vis*, you wish. — “Well, isn't it asier to say at once, making him a leg, ‘Your most obedient, Sir?’”

Pat continues to render word for word without comment, until he comes to *demitto*, I let down, *auriculas*, my ears, — “I had a dacent pair, until ould Father Flanagan laid hold of 'em, and lugged me by them through the Greek Grammar, and over the *pons asinorum*,”—*ut*, as, *asellus*, a young donkey, *iniquæ mentis*, of an uneven mind,—“Sure that's an iligint way of telling a donkey he isn't quite a gentleman.”

“That will do, Sir,” said the examiner,

unable to suppress a smile ; “ you may sit down, Mr. Fitzpatrick.”

Edmund Knightley was then upon his legs for nearly an hour, during which time his courteous demeanour towards the examiners, and the appropriate and eloquent language in which he rendered the Latin and Greek authors into English, as well as his quiet though pertinent replies to the many questions put to him, elicited the warm approval of his questioners ; and at the conclusion of his examination, which had now lasted two days, *vivâ voce*, and on paper, he was intensely gratified on being told,—

“ We are much obliged, Mr. Knightley, and will not trouble you with any further questions.”

A low murmur of applause was heard amongst the visitors, on which, turning his head, Edmund beheld some of his college friends, seated on the lowest benches, whose joy-lit faces bespoke the satisfaction they felt at his success.

Half an hour afterwards, on the school-

room doors being thrown open, he was surrounded by them, with congratulations on the splendid examination he had passed.

When this is over, the masters hold a consultation with closed doors, as to the merits of the students who have appeared before them, and to those who have given satisfaction a little printed strip of paper is awarded, as a passport to taking their degree, which is most anxiously waited for by the friends of those who have exhibited any signs of failure; certain it is that this ordeal of a public examination is, to the nervous and timid, a most severe trial, and I have known instances of young men so thoroughly enervated by long and continuous reading, and low diet, as absolutely to faint away in the school-room.

Albeit, not naturally nervous, Fitzpatrick experienced certain uneasy sensations as to his fate that day; for although of good abilities, and well read in the classics, as to logic, he just knew that a horse-chestnut could not be converted into a chestnut-horse; and it was on his account that the

examiners were rather longer in their deliberation than usual that evening, one being for plucking and another for passing him.

“Well,” exclaimed the latter, “Mr. Knightley has passed a splendid examination, for which he is entitled to rank in a double-first class, and Mr. Fitzpatrick being of the same college, I vote we give him his *testamur*; he is certainly clever, although I suspect an idle dog. This manuscript of his is the most curious piece of caligraphy, with the most extraordinary hieroglyphics I have ever seen, and the language so unintelligible that I must send it to my friend, the Orientalist, in the Bodleian Library to decipher.”

A hearty laugh being indulged in at Fitzpatrick's expense, the little slip of paper was signed, and his friend O'Connor, who had been in waiting outside the door, seizing it from the hand of the official, whose duty it was to distribute these much-coveted documents, ran home to his college, on reaching which, his Irish yell of triumph

rang through the quadrangle, echoed back by Fitzpatrick down three pair of stairs—door to the left. We need scarcely say that the two Irishmen, with sundry others of their party, made such a night of it afterwards that Mr. Fitzpatrick was obliged to draw very largely on his stock of blarney the next morning, when summoned before the dons, to prevent instant dismissal from the university.

Edmund Knightley, on the termination of the examination for that term, returned home in the highest spirits as a double-first class-man; the Earl being not less delighted than his father at his honourable conclusion of college life; but the warm reception he experienced from Lady Agnes gratified him more than all other congratulations from relatives and friends. He had toiled and laboured hard to obtain her approbation; for her sake he had burnt the midnight oil; love for her had proved the incentive to renewed exertions of mind,—her favour his coveted reward.

“Dear Edmund,” she exclaimed on their

first meeting, "how pale you look!—but I am overjoyed at your success."

"Your approving smile, dear Agnes," he replied, "is more than a sufficient reward for laborious days and sleepless nights;—air and exercise will soon restore me to health again."

"Indeed I hope so," she said; "I shall feel proud of a double-first class-man for my especial knight-errant in our rides and drives; and it must be admitted, Edmund, that we have had rather a dull time these last two months without you."

"Then you miss my agreeable society, sometimes, Agnes?"

"Indeed we all do at Woodborough, even down to the little herd-boy, who was always asking 'when Master Edmund might be coming home?'"

"Well, Agnes, such kind thoughts are most gratifying; but I fear now you will be tired of my continual presence, as I shall not again return to Oxford, except for a few days, to take my degree."

"If you do not leave us until we are

tired of you," Agnes said, with a cheering smile, "your visit will be a very long one; and you know Papa is never quite happy unless you are here."

"And you, Agnes,—do you wish me to remain?"

"How can you ask that question, you silly boy?—man I must now call you, I suppose, Edmund,—are you not to me as an only brother? So now, as it is a fine afternoon, you must drive me over to Morton Grange—Edith will be so glad to see you, with all your blushing honours thick upon your brow. You know you have always been a great favourite of hers, and she ever takes your part, even against me, when we have any little differences of opinion."

Edith's reception of Edmund appeared less joyous than that of Agnes; perhaps she did not feel well—did not care much about him; perhaps it was on account of her mother's presence—yet so it was, that a certain restraint in her manner towards him was very perceptible. But Edmund's heart

was too much occupied with selfish happiness, to think of any one but Agnes—he had neither eyes nor ears for any one else then.

Soon after Edmund's return to Woodborough Park, where, after a week spent with his own family, he had now become domiciled as usual, the Earl issued cards of invitation to all the surrounding families for a ball and supper on a large scale, to inaugurate his daughter's introduction to the world, who was now to preside at the head of his table; but from this list the Shuttleworths had been excluded, greatly to their dissatisfaction, although the clergyman of their parish, Mr. Sherrard, had received an invitation. This grand fête formed the general topic of conversation for a fortnight previous to its taking place, and Alphonso expressed to his friend the Captain a great desire to be one of the party.

“I am sorry to say, Jack, that I cannot assist you in this matter; your governor gave great offence to the Earl by writing

that off-hand letter about St. Austin's; had he consulted me, I should have told him the place could not be sold; but that is his weak point — believing everything may be had for money. The nobility and gentry of this county are particularly stiff-necked, and won't stand that sort of thing."

"Well, Duncombe, but the governor thought he was paying him a compliment by offering to purchase it at his own price. Would not you be pleased with a man making a good offer for one of your horses?"

"That's a different thing altogether, Jack; I am not a peer, but a poor Captain of Dragoons, and people know I don't refuse to sell a horse at a good price. Moreover, horses and dogs are marketable commodities, often changing hands. You might bid the Marquis even a large price for a hunter without giving him offence, and your governor might try to buy a wife for you by offering a fine settlement to her father, and this would be taken as a compliment—for when young ladies come out

in the world it is tantamount to trotting a horse out at Tattersall's. Half of the girls are educated and brought out to be married—prepared for disposal or sale to the highest bidder—and Papas and Mammias are flattered by compliments paid to their children; but talk of purchasing their patrimonial estates, and, by Jove, Sir, you will raise a hornet's nest about your ears in a moment! Your governor had shown more wisdom in asking the hand of Lady Agnes Gerard for you, than in offering to buy St. Austin's."

"Well, what sort of a girl is she, Duncombe?—prettier than Miss Maxwell?"

"Handsome, Jack, I think, with finer features, more of the Grecian cast; in short, I consider her a splendid specimen of female beauty—to my mind, quite faultless in form and feature—with eyes like diamonds."

"By gad! Duncombe, I should like to have a look at her; she might do, if the other failed."

"Oh, exactly," replied the Captain, with a sneer; "Lady Agnes Shuttleworth would be just the ticket to please your Mamma;

but you must wait, my boy, until the annual hunt ball, after Christmas, when I will try and introduce you to her."

"Thank you, Duncombe, but is there no chance of seeing her before that time?"

"Very little; unless you find out when she may be calling at Morton Grange, and pop in unexpectedly; or you may loiter about the road near Woodborough, or hide yourself in the pleasure grounds behind the lawn, to get a glimpse of her face; only beware of spring-guns and man-traps, and two huge keepers who are always prowling about the premises. There is also a brother Oxonian now staying at Woodborough, a double-first class, and a double-fist man, not unlikely to handle any fellow roughly whom he may think poaching after his game."

"Who's he, Duncombe?"

"Young Edmund Knightley, a finer man than Reginald, but, like him, of a saucy, spicy temper when put upon his mettle. And now, Master Jack, having given you these few hints, I must say good-bye for the present."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE eventful evening of the ball arrived, for such it was destined to prove to more than two or three of the chief personages in this tale. It would be needless to say that, directed by the good taste of Mrs. Egerton, all the arrangements were most complete, and the supper table laid out in a style not inferior to that of the first London confectioner; while of viands, in the shape of poultry, game, &c., there was a very abundant supply from the Earl's own yards and preserves.

Edith Maxwell had been staying at Woodborough during the last week, sharing with Lady Agnes the delightful anticipations of pleasure to be derived from their first ball; and as the clock struck the hour

of nine, the two friends, radiant in their youthful charms, entered arm in arm the grand saloon, now tastefully decorated as a ball room, of which, as yet, the only occupants were the Earl and Mrs. Egerton. Edmund was soon added to the group, looking well, but more thoughtful than usual, and there was a faint, unfeigned smile on his face as he addressed some complimentary words to Lady Agnes, which came not from the heart.

With all her apparent cordiality and affection Edmund had his misgivings that Lady Agnes did not love him so deeply as he had long and fondly hoped; and this ball, although inevitable, he had been looking forward to with great anxiety and even aversion, as the dreaded ordeal to be encountered, decisive of his future fate. She was now coming forth in all her dazzling beauty, to be admired by eyes perhaps more fascinating than his; to be addressed in language more soft and winning, and assailed by all those little flattering attentions which men of the world could pay with much greater effect than himself.

Amongst the two hundred guests invited that evening, who could say his most bitter rival was not to be found? Who could say that she might not prefer one of that throng, even a stranger, to himself? Such thoughts rendered Edmund gloomy and abstracted; he tried to dispel them from his mind, but like unpleasant visitors they would remain. The company were now, however, beginning to arrive, with the majority of whom being acquainted, his attention became otherwise engaged.

The ball was opened by Agnes and Edmund dancing together in the same quadrille with Reginald and Edith, and about half-past ten o'clock the Marquis and Marchioness of Dunkerton, with Sir Digby Colville, made their entrée, being the last of the party expected that evening. The Marchioness was not less distinguished for her commanding figure than her graceful and dignified deportment; and not having yet reached her thirtieth year, was then in the full prime of woman's loveliness, possessing fine, handsome features, ex-

pressive of those kind and gentle feelings which circulated through her heart, and without a particle of pride or affectation.

After dancing with Sir Digby, the Marchioness accepted Edmund for her second partner, and the Baronet having been introduced to Lady Agnes, they took their station as *vis-à-vis* in the next quadrille.

“You look pale and woe-begone, Edmund,” the Marchioness remarked, for he was her especial favourite of all the young men with whom she was acquainted. “Your studies have been too severe; but I am rejoiced your ambition has been rewarded by all the honours you could desire.”

“Call it not ambition,” he said; “I wished to please my father, and my too kind godfather; for their gratification I have toiled, and most thankful am I to have succeeded.”

“Was there no other approving smile you wished to win also?” she asked, casting a meaning glance towards Lady Agnes.

Edmund’s changing colour confessed the secret he was unwilling to acknowledge;

but not answering her question, the Marchioness said—

“ You mistrust me, Edmund.”

“ Indeed I do not ; I would trust you with my heart’s deepest secret, and you only ; but this is not the place to talk of such matters. I shall see you soon again. But now tell me what you think of your first partner this evening ?”

“ He is Dunkerton’s friend,” she said in a low tone,—adding in one still lower, “ not mine.”

“ I understand you ; are you engaged for the next dance ?”

“ No,” she replied ; “ I am not very fond of dancing, and shall sit down, or take your arm into the next room, which is less crowded.”

The Marchioness and Edmund had been sitting together some short time, engaged in conversation more earnest than that generally current in a ball-room, when their attention became arrested by some remarks made by two gentlemen standing near them, to whom Edmund was unknown.

“Well, Roberts, as you are a phrenologist and physiognomist, tell me your candid opinion of the two fair *debutanti* of this evening?”

“I do not like answering idle questions, Chetwynd; they are, however, both very beautiful—the fairest flowers from that once noble tree planted in the garden of Eden my eyes have ever rested upon.”

“Their characters, their dispositions, Roberts, I would know, their faces are patent to all, radiant in loveliness. I am now like Cœlebs in search of a wife—which would you recommend to a true friend? Lady Agnes appears to my sight divinely beautiful, and the other strikingly handsome.”

“Reverse your terms, Chetwynd, and they will then be correctly applied. The first possesses every personal attraction to beguile the senses of man, but heart and mind are wanting to hold him her willing slave. The soul of love, benevolence, and every pure and gentle feeling beams in the soft eyes and heaven-born smile of Edith

Maxwell ; it would be worth years of labour to obtain her heart and hand—a treasure “ *gemmis venalis nec auro.*”

“ What does that Latin phrase mean, Edmund ?” asked the Marchioness, when the two gentlemen moved further on.

“ A treasure not to be bought with jewels or gold.” “ His opinion is mine also,” continued the Marchioness ; a more lovely, amiable girl than Edith Maxwell does not, I believe, exist.”

“ Do you think her then superior to Agnes ?” inquired Edmund in surprise.

“ Were I a man Edith would be my choice,” she replied ; “ and now we will return to the ball-room, or my lord may feel jealous of my sitting so long with you.”

The words of the Marchioness, “ Edith would be my choice,” rankled in Edmund’s mind, as rebellious to his long-cherished love of Agnes ; but they held a place in his memory for many years afterwards. He was vexed and angry with them that evening, so much so that he did not even ask Edith to dance. Edith felt hurt also

that Edmund had failed to show her this little mark of attention, although she had no lack of partners for every dance, save one, the valse. Edmund's heart at last smote him when he saw her sitting down, and approaching her he said, "Will you take a few turns to this enlivening air?"

"Thank you," she replied, "for the compliment, but you know I never waltz."

"Agnes does, why should not you?"

"I do not like the dance, and am sure it would make me giddy."

"Are you engaged then for the next quadrille?"

"Yes," she replied, "to Sir Digby Colville."

"Hah!" he muttered, "that man seems the ladies' great favourite to-night," and with a bow he moved on.

"Edmund appears sadly out of temper," Mrs. Maxwell remarked; "do you know the cause, Edith?"

"No, Mamma, unless he is vexed with Agnes dancing twice with Sir Digby Colville."

“ Ah, very likely, my dear, she really does seem very much engrossed with the handsome, gay baronet ; but I have been told, my dear Edith, by one who ought to know, that he is quite a man of the world ; therefore you must not believe all the fine complimentary speeches he may address to you.”

Forewarned is to be forearmed, and her mother's remarks were not forgotten by Edith, when dancing afterwards with Sir Digby, whose conversation, replete with soft nothings, failed to make the same impression it had produced on Lady Agnes. The gallant baronet soon discovered his mistake, in believing Edith to be a young silly girl, ready with simpers and blushes to appropriate his pretty little compliments. He therefore altered his mode of attack, for he had a point to gain ; he wished to know more of Lady Agnes, and after descanting on her beauty and great attractions, he said in a careless tone, “ Your friend is engaged already, I hear, to Mr. Knightley.”

“ I cannot tell,” Edith replied.

“ I conclude you could tell,” he added,

“were such really the case, for young ladies seldom keep such interesting matters secret from their dearest friends.”

“Sir Digby Colville could scarcely expect I should reveal a friend’s secret to a stranger if I possessed it.”

The baronet felt considerably annoyed by this rejoinder, and saw very clearly that his desired information could not be obtained through Edith Maxwell, who possessed more discretion than he had given her credit for; however, as she was one of the prettiest girls in the room, and in the baronet’s opinion the belle of the party, he politely petitioned for another dance after supper, which was as politely declined; but as the dining-room doors were now thrown open, he had the pleasure of sitting between her and Mrs. Maxwell at the supper-table, the Marquis with Lady Agnes being opposite to them.

A full hour having been devoted to refreshment dancing was resumed with greater spirit than before, particularly on the part of the gentlemen, who had made rather

free with the Earl's champagne, of which the supply was most abundant. Edmund had taken more than he usually did because Lady Agnes refused him a second dance; she pleaded engagements half-a-dozen deep at least, and Edmund, annoyed by what he thought excuses only, expressed himself rather warmly on her dancing so often with Sir Digby Colville. Agnes retorted by saying she thought she had a right to please herself in her selection of partners, and she should waltz with him again after supper; he was a delightful waltzer, so graceful, so quiet, so unlike country taught dancers.

Edmund could not trust himself to reply, he felt too indignant, and to stifle his glowing resentment he drank more wine, which added fuel to the fire now raging within his breast. Again to his glaring vision the form of his beloved was presented, whirled round and round by his detested rival, her head almost reclining on his shoulder.

The sight maddened him almost to desperation; he turned aside from the sicken-

ing spectacle, and his blood-shot eye fell upon the face of Edith Maxwell sitting with her mother. There was a soft, sad expression on her generally smile-illuminated features, which seemed to say, "I feel for your distress, and would relieve you if I could."

Edmund could not resist that look, it reminded him of all her gentle interest in his welfare, of the part she had often taken in his defence. He was by her side in a moment, softened and subdued.

"You are engaged, I suppose, Edith," he said, "half-a-dozen deep like Agnes, and cannot now dance with me?"

"I am," she replied, "for the two next quadrilles, but in the third I will with pleasure be your partner."

"Thank you; this room is very warm, will you take a turn with me in the next until this valse is finished, if you, my dear madam," addressing Mrs. Maxwell, "have no objection."

"Certainly not, Edmund, but she must return in time."

They passed on in silence through the throng into the second room.

"It is not cool even here," Edmund said, "let us go into the hall, it will be more refreshing there."

"What has so excited you this evening?" Edith asked in a gentle, anxious tone.

"I have been worried and provoked, Edith, by Agnes acting in defiance of my advice. I warned her against that Irish baronet, and she has already danced with him three times."

"Agnes would never suffer dictation," she replied; "how can you expect her to bear it now?"

"Advice is not dictation, Edith, I merely told her what I had heard of him."

"Which I suppose she did not choose to believe," added Edith, "and therefore resolved to judge of him herself."

"Would you have danced with a stranger so often on the first night of your introduction?—and did he not ask you for a second?"

"Yes," replied Edith, "he did, but I declined; for, although agreeable, Sir

Digby's very pretty speeches abound in too much flattery to suit my taste."

"Did he ask you about Agnes?"

"It is really so much more than cool here," she said, without answering this question, "that I would rather return to the ball-room."

"No, Edith, not there, come with me into the library, for I am really so thirsty to-night, I must have a bottle of soda-water."

"Then you must be quick, Edmund, or Mr. Addleby will miss his quadrille, and mamma be angry with me for disappointing him."

"Let the mad fool wait," exclaimed Edmund, impatiently, "you would not marry that fellow, Edith, would you?"

"Oh, no!" she replied, laughing; "what could put that into your head?"

"I heard him speak in such rapturous strains of your beauty after supper, three glasses of wine always making him crazy, that I verily believe he will propose to you this very night; but for Heaven's sake,

Edith, don't let father or mother persuade you to accept him ; there is madness in his family, and my belief is he will end his days in a lunatic asylum."

Edith shuddered, saying, "Poor man, I pity him."

"Pity him to a certain extent if you like, Edith, although pity is a dangerous feeling for a girl to indulge in towards man. Let no considerations on earth, let no persuasions, induce you to link your fate with his. The horror of such an alliance, you, dear Edith, cannot now understand, but the lot of her who becomes his wife will be fearful indeed."

"Rest assured, Edmund, Mr. Addleby would never be my choice."

"I am rejoiced to hear you say so, for I take a deep interest, of course, in your future happiness. Now tell me what this plausible Irishman said of Agnes?"

"Only what you might naturally suppose, that she was divinely beautiful, the most charming, delightful young lady he had met in his walk through the world."

“ Did he ask no questions about her ? ”

“ Yes, he asked if she was not already engaged to Mr. Knightley ? ”

“ Hah ! so I thought ; and what answer did you return, Edith ? ”

“ That I could not tell him, and on his pressing the question, added that if the case were so, he could not expect I should reveal a friend’s secret to a stranger.”

“ You spoke discreetly and properly, Edith, and I now perceive, as I before suspected, this man’s purpose.”

“ Well, Edmund, I really must return to the ball-room, or mamma will be very angry, and you will have a lecture also for detaining me so long.”

“ Not exactly contrary to your inclination, I hope,” he said, rather more cheerfully, as they left the library, but you will not of course repeat the conversation that has passed between us to Agnes.”

“ Certainly not. I would not make mischief between you for the world ; and now take my advice, as you so often give me yours, do not even mention the name of

Sir Digby Colville to her again, for she has no doubt acted towards you to-night from a feeling of (perhaps a little pardonable) resentment for your presuming to question her conduct. We are both now released from lectures and lessons," she said, with a playful smile, "we are now become women of the world."

"That *you* will never be, Edith, I would answer for," he replied, "but there stands Addleby, I declare, before Mrs. Maxwell, and the sets are already forming; don't forget my caution and my quadrille, and now, my dear Mrs. Maxwell," he said, on releasing Edith's arm, "I will do penance for my sin in detaining her so long, by sitting with you until she returns, if that cracked Addleby does not run away with her."

"You appear cracked yourself this evening, Edmund," Mrs. Maxwell said.

"Not unlikely," he replied good-humouredly; "too much learning has, perhaps, made me mad, as Festus said to Paul; however, there is no hereditary failing of

this kind in my family ; but poor Addleby is quite crazy sometimes, his father died in a mad-house."

"Are you serious, Edmund?—quite sure of this?"

"Quite, my dear madam ; my father saw him there—but if not crazy, he is certainly tipsy to-night; look at his dancing—Edith seems quite perplexed what to do. I must go to her assistance if necessary."

Edmund was in a moment by Edith's side, her partner being at that moment performing a *pas seul* with such extraordinary skips and hops, and so intent upon his performance, as to excite the merriment of all beholders save poor Edith and Major Townsend, who was standing close to her.

"By gad! Knightley," the Major exclaimed, loud enough to be heard by those around, "that fellow's as mad as a hatter!"

"He is not in a fit state to dance with any young lady," remarked the Rev. Mr. Sherrard; half the room is attracted by his crazy feats."

At this moment Addleby, with a spring

somewhat resembling that of a wild Indian, crossed over to his partner, and seizing her hands, swung her round with such violence that she fell against Mr. Sherrard, who being a little, spare man, was knocked down by the force of the concussion, while Edith was saved from a similar fall by Edmund's arm.

"Take her away, Sir," said the Major, "or I will myself." But Edmund had already decided on this step by placing her arm within his, when Addleby following, demanded furiously "what right he had to take his partner?"

"I will answer that question, Sir," said the Rev. Mr. Sherrard, greatly excited by his fall. "I advised Mr. Knightley to do so. You have knocked me down, Sir, by your violence, and that young lady must have fallen also but for his timely assistance. You are not in a fit state, Sir, to be in ladies' society."

"And who are you that dare insult me thus?" Addleby said savagely, now turning his glaring eyes on the diminutive pastor.

“My name is the Rev. J. Sherrard of Hardington, as you know perfectly well.”

“Yes, I know you for a canting parson, but your cloth protects you from being dealt with as you deserve.”

“My cloth, sir!—my cloth shall *not* protect me,” retorted the little vicar, beside himself with excitement; and tearing his coat off, he threw it on the floor.

“Take up your coat, sir,” the major said. “I have a word for your private ear, Addleby; come with me into the supper-room for a moment.”

Addleby followed the major as if mechanically, and when there, said impatiently, “Now, Townsend, what have you to say?”

“That you have made a confounded fool of yourself to-night by taking too much wine; and that when you are sufficiently sobered, by drinking the mixture I am preparing for you, your first business is to make the most ample apology to Miss Maxwell for your rough usage; by gad, sir, I never saw any poor girl so frightened

in my life; you treated her shamefully, every one was remarking it."

"I am really distressed to hear you say so, Townsend, but I was not aware of it until you told me. I will go directly, and make every apology."

"No, not yet. Remain here half an hour at least, and drink this"—pouring out a few drops from a small bottle he drew from his pocket, into a wine glass of water—"which will soon sober you."

Edith's pale face and trembling frame revealed to her mother that something unpleasant had occurred between her and Mr. Addleby, which was quickly explained by Edmund, greatly to Mrs. Maxwell's horror, and confirmed immediately afterwards by others who had witnessed the scene. But great was her surprise when Mr. Addleby shortly afterwards, — quite sobered by the major's prescription, — stood again before her and Edith, offering the most humble apologies for what he chose to term his awkwardness, and soliciting another dance.

“My daughter is engaged, sir,” Mrs. Maxwell said, in a tone which none could misunderstand; “and were she not, I should not again permit her to become subject to a repetition of such behaviour.”

“I wished to convince you, Mrs. Maxwell, it was purely accidental—by losing my balance; you could not suppose it intentional.”

“You have had my answer to your application, Mr: Addleby, from which I shall not depart;” and she turned her head away to address Edmund, who was sitting between herself and Edith, on which Addleby retired without another word.

This little occurrence—for this scene did actually occur nearly as related—had diverted Edmund’s thoughts from dwelling too much on the conduct of Lady Agnes, whom he saw engaged in every dance, waltz as well as quadrille. He had now also resolved to show her, by an assumption of gaiety towards Edith, his indifference to her flirting with the baronet; but Edith was not deceived by his pre-

tended lightness of spirits. His wandering eye and uneasy look towards Lady Agnes proved to her what his thoughts really were.

The ball was now brought to a close with the usual dance on such occasions, in which Edith again became the partner of Edmund; and thus terminated the festivities of the evening.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE next morning, at a late hour, the family party at Woodborough were assembled round the breakfast table, with looks expressive of anything but pleasure from their last night's fête. The earl seemed gloomy and dissatisfied — Mrs. Errington very serious — Edmund pale and dejected — Edith thoughtful — and Lady Agnes was decidedly in a very bad humour; for her father had spoken rather sharply to her on her flirting (as he called it) with Sir Digby Colville, saying, "that although he had been staying with the marquis once or twice previously, he was comparatively a stranger to them all."

Lady Agnes pouted her pretty lip, scarcely deigning to recognise Edmund's

morning salutation; and after drinking a cup of tea, without eating anything, she rose from the table and retired to her own room, under the plea of a bad headache. She was followed soon after by Edith, who, on asking if she felt better, received a laugh in reply.

“I have no very bad headache, Edith,” she said; “but I expected another lecture from papa, and I shall not venture downstairs again till luncheon time. It seems very hard that, at my first ball, I should not be allowed to please myself by selecting agreeable instead of disagreeable partners; and as to dancing one quadrille, and waltzing twice with Sir Digby Colville, what impropriety can there be in that? Other girls were waltzing with the same partners much oftener than I did with him, and I daresay, if he had asked you, Edith, you would not have refused.”

“I did refuse, Agnes, to dance with Sir Digby Colville a second time.”

“But why did you refuse him, Edith?” she inquired in surprise; “he was decidedly

the most handsome, *distingué* looking person in the room, and most agreeable in manners and conversation."

"I did not appreciate the gentleman or his conversation sufficiently, I suppose; but I am not fond of high-flown compliments, which mamma says are the general language of men of the world, like Sir Digby Colville, and mean nothing."

"Did he pay you many compliments, then?" asked Lady Agnes, rather anxiously.

"More than I liked to hear, and, therefore, I thought he had better repeat them to more attentive ears than mine."

"But I saw you dancing twice with Edmund," Lady Agnes said, rather spitefully; "you found *his* conversation very agreeable, no doubt."

"Not particularly, my dear Agnes, but I could not refuse an old friend like Edmund—that is quite a different thing altogether; with him or his brother I should not hesitate dancing twice, or oftener, but certainly not with any other gentleman."

“ Well, Edith, which of the two brothers do you intend to accept, as they seemed equally attentive to you last night, although Edmund appeared the most favoured ? ”

“ I have never thought of accepting either, my dear Agnes, neither do I believe either of them regards me in any other light than that of a friend.”

“ I should prefer Reginald,” Lady Agnes continued, “ he is handsomer, and more lively and chatty than his brother, who, between ourselves, dear Edith, bores one sadly sometimes with his advice and lectures. He would just suit a girl of your sober domestic ideas, my dear, but I must have something more gay for my future partner in life.”

“ I fear, dear Agnes, you will find little prospect of happiness with a gay man of the world ; but we are both too young and happy to think of marrying yet, so now let us take a stroll through the pleasure grounds, or my head will ache seriously, for the music has been ringing in my ears all the morning.”

“We shall meet Edmund, I fear, and he looked at breakfast just in the humour for another lecture, although I expressed my sentiments on that subject very freely last night, and I hope, for the future, he will confine his advice to one young lady instead of two; in short, if he ventures on reproof or remonstrances to me again, we shall have some serious quarrel, which I should very much regret, as he is such a favourite with papa.”

“You need not fear meeting Edmund or a lecture,” Edith replied, “as he has gone on horseback over to St. Austin’s.”

“To lecture the two Miss Duncombes, I suppose,” added Lady Agnes, “for their violent flirtations last night; now, *they* are flirts, if you please, Edith, although I ought not, perhaps, to say so to you who are such a favourite with their brother. I rather think, my dear,” she continued, with a laugh, “the captain stands first on your list of admirers, even before the Messrs. Knightley.”

“He is a very pleasant companion,

Agnes, but certainly not the person I should fall in love with."

"Well, I admire your caution, Edith, for papa says he is little short of a gentleman horse-dealer."

"And I was told last night," replied Edith, "that Sir Digby Colville is of the same profession, — living by his wits and luck at cards."

"Edmund's information, I conclude, or some of the Knightley family's."

"You are quite mistaken, Agnes, it was given me by a gentleman I had never before seen, until he was introduced to me last night, and who said he was well acquainted with Sir Digby."

"Some ill-natured person, jealous of his superiority."

"I should think not, Agnes, as my informant appeared very good-tempered, and, I think, quite as good-looking as Sir Digby."

"Then you asked him these questions, I suppose?"

"Indeed, you do me great injustice ;

Sir Digby Colville is nothing to me, and how can you think I should ask a perfect stranger questions about him. I have no such indelicate curiosity, but being our *vis-à-vis* in a quadrille, my partner volunteered the information by saying, 'That is Sir Digby Colville, a man I meet frequently in London during the season, who, by horse-dealing, card-playing, and betting at races, contrives to spend two or three months in town, and lives the remainder of the year upon his friends. He is as well known at Almack's as the Dowager Duchess of C. and her three unmarried daughters, with as little prospect of changing his state of single blessedness as those young ladies; but perhaps he may fare better in the country with girls in their teens.'

"Well, Edith, such remarks are very ill-natured, even if true, and I conclude your partner, having taken a fancy to you himself, feared you might feel a preference for Sir Digby."

"But, Agnes, as *I* have not taken a fancy for either of these gentlemen, I hope

neither will take a fancy for me; so now put on your bonnet whilst I go for mine."

We need not relate further conversation between the two friends during their walk, on the conclusion of which Edith had arrived at another termination, that Agnes was not really in love with Edmund Knightley, if he was with her. She also perceived that the Irish baronet had made a very favourable impression upon her friend. Of the earl's wishes or intentions, with regard to Agnes and Edmund, Edith was profoundly ignorant, so closely and carefully had these been concealed within his own breast; but from his partiality for Edmund, she surmised that the earl would be well pleased by Edmund's union with his daughter; and in conformity with these ideas, she had resolved to do all in her power to heal the breach between them.


Edmund had ridden over to St. Austin's for the sake of a good gallop, by which to dispel, if possible, the gloomy thoughts that had taken possession of his mind. His visit was not intended for the ladies,

but to inspect some alterations in the buildings of the home farm, which, on taking possession of the property, he purposed keeping in his own hands. He was not in the humour that morning for making calls upon any one, much less upon two flirting girls, such as the Miss Duncombes. He did not like them, their mother, or their brother, — the last least of all; to whom his dislike had been increased by his particular attention to Edith Maxwell the previous night—but what was, or could it be to him, with his heart devoted to another? She was a kind, affectionate, and most amiable girl. “Yes,” he soliloquized, “perhaps more amiable than Agnes, although not so beautiful—yet others think differently; and the words of the Marchioness, what were they?—“Edith would be my choice.” She is not mine, but a dear good girl, nearly as dear to me as my own sister, and I must prevent her, if possible, forming a bad marriage. By the way, I may as well call and lunch at Morton Grange, Mrs. Maxwell will be glad to hear her daughter is not the

worse for her first ball—and I shall give her a quiet hint about the Captain—not to encourage his visits to Morton Grange; he is a plausible, smooth-tongued fellow with women, like that confounded Irish baronet—both dissipated men of the world—reckless and extravagant—to whom the idea of domestic happiness is unknown.”

Having despatched his business at St. Austen's, in a very off-hand and impatient manner, so unlike his usual custom, Edmund began to retrace his steps towards home, jogging leisurely along, his horse keeping pace with his now more sober reflections. He was calmly reviewing the past night's events—the impatience of Agnes, and her resentment at his well-intended advice; and before reaching the Grange, he had resolved for the future on an entire change of conduct towards her; “for like myself,” he exclaimed, “she may be led, but not driven.”

Mrs. Maxwell was at home; the Colonel was out riding, so that Edmund had a cozy chat with her before the luncheon hour arrived; in the course of which he touched



upon Edith's partners of the previous night, making comments upon and noticing Captain Duncombe's particular attentions.

"I believe he is a favourite with both yourself and the Colonel," Edmund said.

"We like him very well, Edmund — he is agreeable, sensible, and well informed."

"Then perhaps you think him desirable as a son-in-law?"


"Why, really, Edmund, I have never thought of him in that light, but you have some reason, I suppose, for speaking to me on this subject; you do not think Edith is attached to him?"

"Indeed, I hope not," Edmund said, "although he is a person likely to take with a young artless girl like her; but I conclude you will require some more essential requisites in your future son-in-law than a handsome face and agreeable manners. The latter can easily be assumed, and I doubt their being natural either to the Captain or that Irish baronet. Now what we know of the former is that he is a half-pay Captain, with about three hundred

a-year,—quite the outside of his income, without further expectations except from an aunt. Aunts are very convenient persons — and with horse-dealing, book-making at races, and a bit of luck at cards occasionally, he makes a great show with his half-dozen hunters — all for sale. Now, my dear Mrs. Maxwell, is this the sort of man — let alone his habits of life, which would be destruction to a wife's happiness — you and the Colonel would select for your sweet-tempered, beautiful Edith's husband?"

"No, Edmund, certainly not, but we have been told that Captain Duncombe possessed his clear fifteen hundred a-year, independent of his mother, although we never thought of him in any other light than as an agreeable acquaintance."

"It is not the case, my dear madam ; whoever gave you this information, it came most likely from himself, for he is neither more nor less than a fortune-hunter, possessing not a shilling more than I have told you, if so much ; and *my* information may



be *relied upon*, as derived from the fountain-head. Mrs. Duncombe's lease has, I am happy to say, very nearly run out, and I shall not let St. Austin's again to any one. I may add, that as the Captain finds his trade of horse-dealing succeed very well in this county, he may be calculating on his board and lodging *gratis* for the future at Morton Grange instead of St. Austin's."

"That, I am quite sure, he will not realise, Edmund; neither do I think Edith is in the least attached to him, although perhaps we have been rather imprudent in receiving him here so often."

"Then," he replied, "be careful not to renew the imprudence, for the evil may be avoided by a little more caution in future. You will not of course repeat my communication to her, or make the slightest allusion to it; for young ladies are rather averse to dictation, and forbidden fruit is, I fear, as attractive still as to their first parent."

"Oh no, Edmund. I am much obliged by your communication, but will not mention a word you have spoken to Edith."

The Colonel entering the room soon after, and luncheon being announced, put an end to further conversation on this subject; but after Edmund's departure Mrs. Maxwell mentioned to her husband what she had heard respecting the Captain.

"Pshaw! my dear, I never dreamt of Duncombe as a son-in-law—the thing is absurd; and as to Edith, she is too young to think of marrying, besides which I am in no hurry to part with her yet, and am quite sure she would accept no one without first consulting you."

"I begin to think," Mrs. Maxwell said, "that Edmund is attached to Edith, notwithstanding the Earl's wish—as we are told—that he should marry Lady Agnes; St. Austin's is a beautiful place, and within an easy distance."

"What has put this fancy into your head, my dear?" asked the Colonel; "you women are always match-making."

"I noticed them particularly last night, Colonel, when Edmund was exceedingly attentive to her, and here he is again this

morning talking in such a manner about the Captain and fearing that we should encourage his attentions, that I feel almost sure he is in love with her himself."

"Well, my dear, I cannot possibly have any objection to Edmund, who is a great favourite with me as well as yourself; but pray don't meddle in the matter, or you will counteract your own wishes, and Edith can remain another week at Woodborough if she likes."

From this day Edmund had resolved on an entire change of conduct towards Lady Agnes, in the hope of regaining her confidence; and he never again alluded to Sir Digby Colville, or questioned her right to act as she thought proper. At dinner that evening he appeared in his usual good spirits and most entertaining mood, for Edmund could be very amusing, and few could resist the influence of his witching smile, which was noticed even by strangers, as imparting a peculiar brilliancy to his handsome features; even Lady Agnes, when stealing a glance at his expressive face, re-

proached herself for having given him pain by her sharp speech on the previous night.

“ You appear in high spirits this evening, Edmund,” Mrs. Errington remarked ; “ I suppose the young ladies at St. Austin’s made themselves very agreeable, as your visit was rather a long one.”

“ I have paid no visit to-day except to Colonel and Mrs. Maxwell,” he replied, “ with whom I took luncheon on my return, thinking they would like to know how Edith was after her dissipation of last night. I merely made a call on the carpenters and workmen at St. Austin’s; but the high-stepping Miss Duncombes are a trifle too fast for one of my quiet jog-trot ideas.”

“ Well, Edmund,” the Earl added, “ you must admit they are very accomplished dancers. I think I never saw two more graceful performers in that way. I wish they would give a lesson or two to Addleby.”

“ I hope and trust one of them may, dear uncle, for he appeared to patronise Miss Charlotte very extensively, and she is just the person to keep a wild refractory hus-

band in order, quite as good, I should think, as a strait waistcoat to him, when he gets into one of his crazy fits. The scene between him, his pastor, and Major Townsend, I am told, was something quite *unique*—the latter exclaiming, ‘Don’t be alarmed, ladies; they won’t bite, although both are as mad as hatters.’”

“I was distressed to see a clergyman so forgetful of his profession,” remarked Mrs. Errington.

“Sherrard is a most excitable man after dinner or supper,” Edmund replied, “when his spirits lead him sometimes into trifling excesses. He is, however, generally most even-tempered, with a truly Christian disposition, and in the pulpit an excellent preacher; but Addleby cannot boast of *his* amiability, being fierce and ungovernable on certain occasions, and so much so that he is only fit to be a bachelor.”

CHAPTER XV.

THE following afternoon, immediately after luncheon, the Marquis of Dunkerton, with Sir Digby Colville, called at Woodborough, selecting that time as the most likely to find the ladies, or rather the Lady Agnes, at home, for whom their visit was more especially intended. A little disappointment, however, awaited the Baronet on his discovering the whole party in the drawing-room, just arranging for a drive.

The Earl came forward to receive the Marquis with a friendly shake of the hand, and the Baronet with a stately bow indicative of his wish for no nearer acquaintance. The moment he entered the room, Edmund directed a furtive glance towards Lady Agnes, over whose features the heightened

colour suddenly spread, which was almost as suddenly succeeded by an unusual paleness.

His eye then rested for a moment on Edith's fair face, which remained perfectly composed, without the slightest change. After paying his compliments to the ladies, the Marquis greeted Edmund in the most friendly manner, engaging him and the Earl in conversation, whilst his friend, Sir Digby, was paying his devoirs to Lady Agnes—speaking of her ball in the highest praise, everything being so well arranged, and then turning, in an easy style, some pretty little compliments to herself, which were received very graciously, with an occasional increase of vermilion when his dark piercing eyes rested upon hers.

The Baronet, from his deep study of female physiognomy, drew certain conclusions from the looks and manner of Lady Agnes, that he had made a favourable first impression; and being satisfied on that point, he now diverged into other topics with her and Edith, fearing the Earl might

notice any particular attention to his daughter. But the Marquis, observing his impatient glances towards the Baronet and Lady Agnes, rose, saying " he feared they had already detained the ladies too long from their drive;" and on their leaving, Edmund felt relieved of a weight which seemed to press him to the ground. He could not join Edith and Agnes whilst his rival remained, but sat talking with Mrs. Errington, and by his unconnected language, in addressing one person whilst thinking of another, she formed a tolerably correct idea of what was passing in his mind.

On the pony carriage being brought round to the hall door, Edmund did not proffer his services as charioteer, thinking the young ladies might prefer being alone, as Mrs. Errington had declined going with them; for, having resolved to maintain an independent course of action towards Lady Agnes, he kept to his determination. There are undoubtedly certain occasions when young ladies prefer their own society to

ours — when they can discuss sundry little matters interesting only to themselves — and this happened to be the case now. Lady Agnes longed to talk about the Baronet, and had no sooner left the pleasure-grounds than she entered on this delightful subject by saying abruptly, —

“ Now is he not handsome, Edith ? ”

“ Well,” replied her friend, not choosing to comprehend her meaning, “ I think the Marquis is very handsome indeed.”

“ The Baronet, I mean, Edith ; don't you think him the most charming, delightful person you have ever met ? — and I am sure he is far better — looking than the Marquis.”

“ Why, dear Agnes, I cannot quite agree with you, for I think the Marquis the most agreeable person of the two, quite as handsome, and more sensible in his conversation. Sir Digby talks of nothing but balls and parties and London fashionables, the opera, the theatres, and such things, which I suppose he thinks we take so deep an interest in as to wish to hear of nothing else.”

“ Well, Edith, I shall enjoy exceedingly

a season in London, and hope to induce Papa to take me there in May next, and I dare say you would not dislike seeing a little of town life also."

"I should have no objection to spend a month or six weeks there, which would be quite sufficient, if not more than sufficient, to satisfy my taste for gaiety; but a London life would not suit me."

"You do not know until you have tried it, Edith."

"Yes, dear Agnes, I know myself well enough to feel I could take no pleasure in continual dissipation, for I have scarcely yet recovered from the effects of my first ball."

"Suppose you were to marry a man of fashion, one who liked to live in London half the year?"

"Such a person would never suit me."

"Perhaps a duke or marquis might, my dear?"

"If I ever should marry, dear Agnes, it will be one whom I can both love and respect for his virtues and good disposition.

Titles and wealth have no attractions for me in such a serious affair as this, and last of all in my opinion is he whom you call a man of fashion."

"Well, dear, our ideas are very different on these points. I wish to see more of the world, to mix more in society, and spend five or six months in London every season, then travel about for amusement and recreation during four more, and perhaps vegetate the other two in the country. But I have had quite enough of Woodborough Park all the year round."

"And yet, my dear Agnes, that time may and most likely will come, should you live long enough to gratify all your wishes to their full extent, that you will look back on the days spent at dear Woodborough as the happiest you have ever known."

"Ah! Edith, you are a pretty little moralist, and I conclude will at last settle down as a contented clergyman's wife, railing against the follies and vices of the world; but, whatever may be your lot, my own dearest Edith, you will ever be the

same to me. And now let us change the subject to one more cheerful."

On their return home, the Marquis and Sir Digby were also occupied in canvassing the relative charms of the two young ladies.

"Well, Digby," asked the former, "what think you of our country belles in their morning costume? Did you see anything superior to them in town last season?"

"No, I think not. They are very beautiful girls, and will create quite a sensation when produced at Almack's. Lady Agnes is in my opinion the finer woman of the two, and Miss Maxwell the most lovely."

"Precisely my idea also, Digby; the one commands, the other engages your attention. The last would be my choice were plurality of wives in fashion here as with the Turks and Jews."

"I am not a friend to Hymen, as you know, Dunkerton."

"Unless Hymen proved himself a great friend to you. Your liberty is not worth more to you than a hundred thousand

pounds, and that you may get with a handsome wife by marrying Lady Agnes."

"Well," replied the Baronet in a careless tone, "I may think about it, for she appears rather favourably inclined towards me, if the money is really forthcoming; but just fancy my predicament with a fine fashionable wife and no increase of means to support her. She has been accustomed to every luxury, and the interest of a hundred thousand pounds would barely keep a girl of her rank in that style of living. I believe it is far more prudent to remain as I am, for there are a great many hitches in those marriage settlements, and the Earl looks like a man who would tie one up pretty tightly."

"Then you know how to manage him. Get a tight hold first on his daughter's heart, which I think you can do very easily, and then you will have the Earl in hand. But you must proceed quietly and regularly — no runaway match or anything of that kind, and I think you have blarney enough, my dear fellow, to get over him at

last. The *suaviter in modo* you understand pretty well. The Marchioness shall send an invitation to the party to dine here next week, when you will have an opportunity of reporting progress. Win her if you can, for all the Earl's funded and landed property (save the entailed portion) will be hers, and the run of Woodborough House is worth at least two thousand per annum, where you will of course take up your winter quarters, and keep your half-dozen hunters for nothing."

"Your suggestions, Dunkerton, are worth consideration, but I am not cut out for a family man."

"Put your brats, if you have any, out to keep at Woodborough too, as we send our whelps to walk at farm-houses. Grand-papas are always fond of children. So, these difficulties being arranged, I must look out my pack for to-morrow's hunting."

Edmund Knightley had now resumed his place in the hunting field, where he was an especial favourite, and with none more so than with his father's huntsman, who

thought great things of Master Edmund, from his entering thoroughly into the sport and the business part, as Will called it, of the profession.

“Mr. Reginald is very well in his way,” he remarked to old Squire White, on Edmund’s first appearance. “He likes the riding part, and can do it very cleverly, but I’m a-thinking, Squire, Master Edmund is the man for hounds, and the farmers likes him better; he’s more come-at-able — ain’t above shaking hands with old Mr. Thickthorn, who has bred us a litter of cubs in Thornydown bushes the last forty years. ‘Ah!’ said he to me this morning, ‘we shall do now again, Will. Master Edmund’s come home, and they do say he’s adone a power of bookwork at Oxford college.’

“‘Carried all afore him, Mr. Thickthorn,’ says I, ‘and comed in the winner of the first prize!’

“‘Well, Will, he has had enough of Latin and Greek to last him all his days, and now I hope he will settle down regularly to the pigskin.’”

“He is more like the old Squire. Mr. Reginald is too hasty, and too proud for a master of foxhounds; but here comes the Marquis, with the Irish Baronet, who, they say, has done a trick or two across Leicestershire as well as over the card-table.”

“Shouldn’t wonder, Squire; he looks a wide-awake man, but I hope to give him the slip to-day. I’m most afraid of that young Shuttleworth, who rode in slap among the Marquis’s pack when they were at check the other day.”

“I think Mr. Reginald will look after him, Will, for he hates him like poison.”


After an interchange of civilities between the two masters, and an inspection of the hounds by the Marquis, who complimented Will Lane on their splendid condition, the order was given for Thornydown Brake, so called from its thick blackthorn bushes, and from which a fine old fox almost immediately broke away on the far side, over a splendid grass vale, with eighteen couples of hounds within a hundred yards of his brush, although screened from view by a

thick double hedge-row, just outside the covert, which was the most awkward in the whole country to get away from, on account of the stiff fences by which it was surrounded, some water meadows, and a deep brook, lying on the lower side, over which foxes generally took their line.

There was a large field of horsemen out on this occasion, and a strong muster from the Marquis's hunt, for there is a fashion in fox-hunting with the majority of sportsmen so called, as well as in other things—such as the little absurd bonnets, and wide, ridiculous, crinolined dresses of ladies—and the Marquis having expressed his intention, two days previously, of meeting Mr. Knightley's hounds at Thornydown Gate, nearly all his supporters residing on that side the country deemed it imperative almost upon them to be there also, the hope of a bow or nod of recognition from my Lord Marquis being the chief inducement with many to patronise his pack. It seemed a great thing for men of little minds and great bodies, residing in the

fashionable watering-place of Waterton, to strut up and down their High Street, in pink, on the afternoons of hunting days, and boast of having been out with the Marquis; they had always capital sport with his hounds, whether the fox ran one mile or ten, or was chopped in covert. It was always the fashion to say so, although the meet was all they went out to see, and to take off their hats to the Marquis.

On the hounds being away from Thorny-down Brake, a rush was made by this heavy brigade for a bridge just in the contrary direction to that taken by the fox, whilst the *riders* of both hunts, stirred up by a little jealous feeling for first places, set to work with the difficulty before them in good earnest. Alphonso, on Mameluke, felt constrained to follow Duncombe, who, having an eye for an easy place, got through the first thick blackthorn hedge, and over the drop leap into the water meadows below, without any casualty; but our hero, by pulling with all his might at Mameluke's mouth just on his taking the



leap, gave himself the benefit of a cold bath in the dyke, which the Captain observing, hallooed out, "Give him his head, Jack, and come along;" and well for him it was he followed his leader's advice, since, from being just behind a first flight man, the water and dirt thrown back into his face prevented him seeing a yard of the ground he was traversing, until Mameluke, taking the brook in his stride, landed him safely on the opposite bank.

Mameluke now strove hard to catch the hounds, two fields ahead of him, and, the fences being of more moderate dimensions, Alphonso kept his seat tolerably well for about a mile, gradually creeping up to those in advance; the leading phalanx consisting of the two Messrs. Knightley, Sir Digby Colville, Duncombe, and two or three others, with Will Lane, and Charley the first whip. Our hero, hating Reginald, was fired by ambition and jealousy to take the lead out of his hands, and Mameluke, having the speed of his rival's horse, passed him as they were approaching a high black

thorn hedge, for an opening in which Will Lane was making, when Alphonso, crossing from his own line to the same place, knocked the huntsman, with his horse, over upon their backs into the next field. The collision was a fearful one for poor Will, who had two ribs broken by the fall, and feeling himself seriously hurt, he told Charley to take his horn to Master Edmund, and ask him to go on with the hounds.

Reginald came up immediately after, having seen the accident, and how caused; and after ordering the second whip to attend Will Lane and see him home, he rode furiously away, determined to wreak his vengeance on the young cotton cub, which he was soon enabled to do by the fox being headed back from a small brake on rising ground. Then bearing down again into the vale, Reginald found himself unexpectedly in the same field with Alphonso, upon whom he now waited, and seeing him again intent on the same trick of crossing his line, he watched the oppor-

tunity, and rode his horse at an acute angle right against him, which sent him spinning out of the saddle, head foremost, into the ditch, and Mameluke falling upon his prostrate master, he was nearly stifled by mud and water, as well as seriously bruised by the horse's exertions to get out.

"Ah! serve him right," exclaimed a young sporting farmer as he passed him, now partly recovered, and leaning against his horse, "for knocking over poor Will."

At the same time a fox-hunting surgeon, thinking he had a case in hand, dismounted to tender his services.

Edmund had also a rival to contend with in this run; no other than the Irish Baronet, who, for the honour of his country, seemed determined to keep the lead. From the fox turning down wind, the pace had slackened sufficiently to enable Sir Digby to ride close upon the hounds, when, in the middle of a large grass field, they were brought to a check by a herd of cattle following the fox; the leading couples feathering away to the right towards Sir

Digby, who, seeing Edmund turning his horse to the left, with a few old hounds still working on the line, tried to hold the others on still further, most irrelevantly taking upon himself the office of huntsman.

Edmund immediately rode up to him, saying, "I will thank you, Sir, to let the hounds alone; we can do very well without your assistance."

"The huntsman is not up, Sir," retorted the Baronet, "and this is the line of the fox."

"I am up, if the huntsman is not," replied Edmund, "and will not permit you to interfere."

"And who are you, Sir?" asked the Baronet, his Irish blood boiling up at Edmund's tone of voice.

"You may easily find out," was the rejoinder, and at that moment Charley came up, telling him that Mr. Lane, having met with a bad fall, had sent his horn to him and begged him to go on with the hounds.

“Then turn them to me, Charley,” was the quick reply, and, with a short blast or two of the horn, the pack followed Edmund, who holding them a little forward over the stained ground, where the fox had turned now with a side wind, they set to work running as hard as at first, the moment they reached the other side of the fence, whilst Sir Digby, fully persuaded that he was in the right direction, had continued moving his horse leisurely on, talking to Duncombe about what he called young Knighthley’s impertinence.

“By gad, Sir,” the Captain suddenly exclaimed, “he has given us the slip; there go the hounds running like wildfire up that hedge-row yonder. We are done; how quietly he and Charley have managed it!—not a scream or note of the horn this windy day.”

“Done on purpose, I’ll be sworn,” replied the Baronet, “but we will soon catch them again; they can’t go the pace like the Marquis’s pack.”

“Can’t they, Colville? You will be

satisfied now on that point; so come along."

Riding to catch hounds running with a good scent, and a start of two fields ahead, is almost a forlorn hope to the most zealous fox-hunter, for he well knows the difficulty, almost impossibility, of seeing them again except by an accidental check. Sir Digby rode fast and furiously to recover his lost honour of being leading man that day, but it was to little purpose; no check of any consequence occurred to let him in again, and on meeting the Marquis they both gave up the attempt, and were riding home by a short cut through the park, when they met Edmund returning with his fox's head.

"Why, Knightley," exclaimed the Marquis in astonishment, "where are you coming from? what have you done?"

"Killed our fox, Dunkerton, in the middle of your lower park — ran into him in the open."

"The deuce you have! Well, that's not a bad day's work for the first time of

handling the horn ; so come and have some luncheon, and feed the hounds in my kennel if you like. You are too far from home to draw again, and as for your field they are scattered all over the country."

"I am much obliged by your kind offer, Dunkerton," Edmund replied, "but as Will has met with a serious accident, I am anxious to see how he is."

"Well, in that case I will not detain you ; but mind, we expect you to dine with us to-morrow, with the Earl."

"With much pleasure I will avail myself of your invitation ;" and Edmund passed on.

"That young gentleman seems inclined to be impertinent," remarked the Baronet.

"It is not his general character to be impertinent to any one, Digby, but quite the reverse ; how was he so to you ?"

"By speaking very sharply to me to-day, when, the hounds being at fault, I was trying to recover the line."

"The impertinence was on your side,

then. I will not permit any man to speak even to my hounds, and you ought to know you were out of order in taking such a liberty when one of the family was in the same field with you, and close to the hounds."

"I wanted to keep the lead, Dunkerton, that's the truth; but I will not submit to be spoken to in the tone he addressed me, and I shall call him to account for it."

"You will do nothing of the kind, Digby, whilst under my roof. A pretty story indeed it would be for people to circulate through the country: here is the Marquis, who blows people up sky high for overriding his hounds, encouraging his particular friend to call out young Knightley for merely telling him he could do without his assistance."

"Then I must wait for another opportunity, after I have left Huntingshire; we shall, I dare say, meet again somewhere."

"If you ever meet Edmund Knightley, Colville, in a hostile manner, you will meet with your match; he is a good shot with

gun or pistol, possessing a steadier hand and stronger nerves than you have. But, independent of these considerations, if you have any serious intention towards Lady Agnes, you would incur her father's unfailing resentment by quarrelling with his godson. The Earl would never forget or forgive you for such an act; and as to marrying his daughter afterwards, the idea is quite absurd."

It is almost unnecessary to add that Sir Digby, being open to conviction, received the advice of his host and friend with the greatest complacency, and no further allusion was made to the subject.

On Edmund's return to the kennels, his first act was to feed the hounds, which had cheerfully followed their young huntsman, and his next to repair directly to Will Lane's house, with whom he found his father, endeavouring to console his suffering servant.

"Well, Master Edmund," asked Will, the moment he entered his bedroom, seemingly oblivious of his own pain, "what did you do with him?"

“Finished him off handsomely in the Marquis’s park, Will. But how are you now? how do you feel?”

“I feels, Master Edmund, as if I could jump out of bed for joy that the Marquises haven’t got the laugh agin us this time; and then taking him home so nicely, and winding of him up just there and then in the Markis’s park.”

After answering other questions about the run, Mr. Knightley interferred by saying, “Talking will do you no good now, Will, so we must leave you for the present, and I suppose Charley must hunt the hounds until you are able to hold the horn again.”

“Well, Sir, I am a-thinking, if Master Edmund don’t mind the trouble, the hounds will do better with him than Charley, who is wildish at times, Sir, as you knows, and they won’t follow him pleasantly, as he is always rating and knocking ’em about. Now, Sir, the hounds is very fond of Master Edmund, and, as soon as they hear his voice in the kennel, I can’t keep ’em quiet, and I am a-thinking, Sir, besides this, that Mr.

Edmund knows our business pretty well, and, as a huntsman, he'll beat the Markis hollow."

"Well, Will," Mr Knightley replied, "if Edmund has no objection, you shall have your desire."

"I have not the slightest, my dear father, but perhaps Reginald would like to hunt the hounds; so we will consult him first, or he may take offence."

"As you please, Edmund, although I am quite satisfied your brother is too impatient to make a huntsman, and moreover he cannot bear kennel work. We will pay him the compliment if you like; but I see Will does not fancy his handling his favourites, so I must give my vote in your favour. Does that satisfy you, Will?"

"Oh yes, Master. Mr. Reginald ain't so fond of hunting as he is of riding, and I expect he and Charley would play old gooseberry with the pack."

"That is just my opinion also, Will; so now rest contented and get well as fast as you can, by keeping quiet in bed. I shall

see you again to-morrow morning," Edmund said, as he left the huntsman's bedside, after giving him a friendly shake of the hand.

On returning to the house, where they found Reginald at luncheon, his father, to avoid increasing the jealousy already existing between his two sons, asked him if he would like to hunt the hounds during Will Lane's illness.

"No, thank you, Governor," was the reply; "that is not exactly in my line, and I hate kennel business. Why can't Charley do it?"

"Will thinks him too wild, and the hounds don't like him."

"Then you know, Governor, I am as wild as Charley, and the hounds hate me more than they do him, for giving them whipcord whenever they come in my way. Why not let Edmund hunt them? He is always pattering about the kennel, and being a double first-class man, I have no doubt he will show equally good talents in the science of fox-hunting."

“Very well,” replied Mr. Knightley, not noticing the sneer of his eldest son, “you shall try your hand with the horn, Edmund; so, that point being settled, I will take off my boots.”

CHAPTER XVI.

It will be gathered from the closing scene of my last chapter that a jealous, envious feeling existed in the heart of Reginald towards his younger brother. Edmund was his superior in disposition and abilities, and, from inheriting his uncle's property, was in a more independent position than himself. He was moreover his father's favourite son, although Reginald had not the slightest cause for murmurings or complaint, since both had been equally indulged, and the elder brother ruled at Wychwood quite as much or more than Edmund did at Woodborough. Reginald was consulted by his father on nearly all occasions, and the keepers and shooting over their landed estates were entirely under his control,

although in the hunting field Mr. Knightley still held the chief power.

It was with a feeling, therefore, of ill-suppressed satisfaction that Reginald so readily assented to the proposition of Edmund succeeding Will Lane in the management of the hounds; knowing the difficulties of his new task, and anticipating his certain failure. In Edmund's present frame of mind, alternating between hope and despair, the idea of more exciting occupation was a relief—a means of escape from dwelling too intently on one harassing subject—his increasing misgivings as to the nature of Lady Agnes' affection for him.

Since the night of the ball her behaviour had been distant and constrained; and his to her more deferential in consequence. Little differences like these had, however, frequently before existed between them for a time, but after the lapse of a few days, they had become friends again. Agnes had pouted and fretted, and looked very cross, but all the while it was evident she felt uncomfortable, and if not

openly so, was secretly most desirous for terms of peace. She was altogether different now—with a composure of manner and courtesy towards him which Edmund could not well understand. Suspense had become agony, yet in their present position he dared not reveal the nature of his regard for her. He could, however, endure this coldness no longer, and finding her alone in the drawing-room on his return from hunting, which she rose to leave as he entered, the exclamation almost involuntarily escaped his lips—"Dear Agnes, have I so deeply offended that you cannot now even bear my presence?"

"The tone in which these words were uttered, and his pale looks, went direct to the heart of Lady Agnes. She turned immediately, and holding out her hand said, "Indeed, Edmund, you have not deeply offended me."

"Then why do you avoid meeting me alone, Agnes?"

"Because," she replied, with a forced smile and deep blush, "I feared you

might favour me with another little lecture."

"That time has passed away," he continued, in a serious tone; "you are no longer a girl, and if I have sometimes ventured on offering you advice, it has been dictated by the most pure unselfish regard for your happiness; and the Searcher of all hearts knows the sincerity of mine towards you. The world is now opening before you, with all its allurements and fascinations. Flattery and falsehood are its peculiar characteristics—and when sated with adulation, the insincerity of which you will soon discover, you may perhaps call to mind the homely though truthful admonitions of the companion of your childhood and friend of your youth. From me, Agnes, you will never hear advice or remonstrance more. My father wishes me to return home; and as my presence here has of late become so irksome to you, my resolution has been taken, to leave Woodborough to-morrow."

This announcement, so totally unexpected, dispelled every tint of colour from the

cheeks of Lady Agnes, who, sinking into a chair, said imploringly—"Oh, Edmund, do not leave us, I entreat you not to go—my father will say it is my doing, and it will make me very unhappy. I confess I have been greatly to blame in treating you so coldly; but forgive me—such conduct shall never be repeated towards you again."

"The Earl shall not know the true cause of my leaving Woodborough," Edmund replied, "for which I have now a very good excuse. On that point, therefore, Agnes, you need feel no anxiety."

"Whatever you may say, Edmund, my father will suspect the true cause of your departure, for he has already shown his displeasure towards me. Once more, then, I entreat you not to leave us now. Dear Edmund, must I plead in vain?"

"No, my dear Agnes," he said, taking her hand; "that you know you can never do. Is it not my greatest happiness to comply with your wishes when I can? But now I am rather in a difficulty how to act, and I will frankly tell you my position

— that, observing your continued avoidance of my presence, I accepted my father's offer to-day of hunting the hounds during poor Will Lane's illness."

"Why, what has happened to him, Edmund?"

"He was very seriously injured to-day, whilst out hunting, by that young cotton-spinner riding against him and knocking him and his horse down together. Two of his ribs were broken, and he is otherwise sadly bruised; and, poor fellow! seeing it was his wish I should hunt the hounds, as he does not like Charley, the first whipper-in, I promised him to do so, thinking it would set his mind at rest."

"Well, dear Edmund, that is one of your kind actions—always thinking of others: but, indeed, I am grieved to hear of poor Lane's accident—he is such a favourite with all of us. Yet why cannot Reginald assist his father, instead of you?"

"He declined doing so; and therefore, with the view of pleasing all parties, I will divide my time between Woodborough and

Wychwood, sleeping there the night after hunting. By this arrangement all cause of suspicion will be removed from your father's mind. I can do no more now, dear Agnes; will this satisfy you?"

"Yes, Edmund; and I am so much obliged by your compliance with my wishes, that I will get up early every hunting morning to make breakfast for you, instead of Mrs. Errington."

Edmund had taken her hand, and was about making an impassioned reply, when the Earl entering the room, he suddenly relinquished it, yet not before the Earl's eye had seen the act; and the heightened colour in the faces of both assured him of their perfect reconciliation, if not of something more. A cheerful smile passed over the features of the fond father on perceiving his daughter's happy though embarrassed look, and his softened address, in his usual mild, affectionate manner, convinced her of his forgiveness for her late distant and petulant behaviour towards his godson.

"Have you seen Edith lately, my dear

Father?" she asked, raising her still-beaming eyes to his.

"Yes, my child, you will find her and Mrs. Errington in the library."

"Well, Edmund," observed the Earl, "if I may judge by appearances—soiled boots, and a happy though scratched face—you have had a satisfactory day's sport."

"Save for a serious accident to Will Lane, my dear Uncle, it would have been very satisfactory indeed."

He then related the occurrences, concluding with his father's desire for him to hunt the hounds, until his huntsman could resume his place.

"I shall, therefore," he added, "be obliged to spend three evenings out of the seven at Wychwood; as the days are now so short, it would be out of my power to return to Woodborough after hunting, in time for your dinner hour."

"Then it has been a bad day for me, as well as poor Will: but I can, of course, raise no objection to your proposal. Your father has the first claim upon your ser-

vices, and I must be content; so now change your dress, and we will talk over these matters after dinner."

That evening was the first really happy one the family at Woodborough had spent together since the night of the ball. All were in good humour and light of heart — Lady Agnes remarkably so, who felt convinced, by her father's cheerfulness, that he had been satisfied with Edmund's explanation.

"Well, Edmund," he remarked, "I hope you will win honours in the field, as you have done in the schools of learning, although your competitor, the Marquis, does not appear to be a first-class man in his self-imposed undertaking of huntsman. Whatever may be your success, however, I hope you will not forget your good temper, which you must expect to be ruffled sometimes; and I sincerely trust young Shuttleworth will not serve you as he has poor Will Lane."

"From what Charley told me," replied Edmund, "I think that young gentleman

has fared little better than our huntsman, to revenge whose fall, Reginald appears to have given him a *quid pro quo*, or tit-for-tat, by knocking him and his horse into the ditch together, where, to use Charley's expression, his favourite steed, Mameluke — late Duncombe's — gave him 'a precious good pounding.' But don't be alarmed, Edith," he said, laughing; "your rubicund admirer is not very seriously hurt, although it appears the aforesaid Mameluke seemed intent on making a roly-poly pudding of him, instead of a shuttlecock. No bones were broken, but Charley said he looked 'uncommon squeamish' when first pulled out of the ditch. Our hunting doctor rode up directly to offer his assistance, and, on my meeting him afterwards in the village, said the young gentleman was more frightened than hurt. Well, Edith, are you not rejoiced at his fortunate escape?"

"I am sorry to hear of accidents befalling any one," she replied, very gravely; "but beyond a fellow-feeling for sufferers generally, I have no further sympathy with

Mr. Shuttleworth, although truly grieved for your huntsman."

Nothing worthy of note occurred at the Marquis of Dunkerton's dinner-party the following evening, which consisted chiefly of guests staying in the house, with the addition only of the Earl of Woodborough and Mr. Knightley's families; for the Marquis was not on visiting terms with many of his neighbours, although once a year it was his custom to give a grand ball and supper to all the supporters of his hunt, to whom in addition a biennial present of venison was made in August and about Christmas; and by these and other means — being also Lord-Lieutenant of the county — his influence was maintained, without the onerous necessity of paying and receiving visits from the neighbouring gentlemen's families, the Knightleys, from their relationship to the Marchioness, being the exception to this general rule.

On the ladies' retiring, the Marquis began joking with Reginald on his tilt with Shuttleworth, junior, the previous day.

“He required a practical lesson, Dunkerton, of that sort, to prevent his doing further mischief.”

“He feels very sore upon the subject, I am told, Reginald, and I should not be surprised at his calling you out.”

“I am not particularly nervous as to what such a cub may say or do, and I rather think, for the future, he will know how to keep his proper distance. Are men’s lives to be jeopardised by such an upstart fellow as this? I suppose we are to provide fresh huntsmen weekly for his amusement to ride down. But I think, between your lordship’s lectures and my practical essays, he has been taught a lesson which he will not soon forget.”

“Duncombe says he declares he will never go out with your hounds again.”

“I am rejoiced to hear it, Dunkerton, and I suppose, therefore, when sufficiently tamed, he will become a valuable member of your hunt.”

“Not just yet, I think. But what are you to do now Will Lane is placed *hors de*

combat— Charley, I suppose, takes the horn ?”

“Oh, no! we are to have an amateur huntsman, in the person of my brother Edmund, who has been voted by the authorities as the most eligible to fill that important situation, and no doubt we shall have some new light thrown in upon the ‘noble science’ by our double first-class-man.”

“He has commenced well, however,” replied the Marquis; “and in my opinion a better man could not have been selected, except yourself, Reginald; but I think you are like me, a little too hasty to hunt hounds.”

“That post, I think, befits those best who are educated for the profession, although we do find occasionally some gentlemen huntsmen, like your lordship, Tom Smith, and Osbaldeston, who excel in everything they undertake, even down to a game at skittles; but as I am not fit for a gentleman huntsman, I am a-thinking, as Will says, I might succeed as a

gentleman horse-dealer, which appears to be the fashion in this neighbourhood, provided your lordship will give me a share of your patronage." This was uttered in a sneering tone, and with a glance across the table at Sir Digby Colville, which the Marquis well understood, but turning it aside in joke, he replied —

"Just the thing for you, Reginald, you are a sharp hand; a trifle too sharp sometimes; but now pass the bottle, and when that is finished we will join the ladies."

Sir Digby Colville bit his lip at Reginald's remark about gentlemen horse-dealers, feeling it was intended for himself; but a look from the Marquis suppressed his rising choler, although he felt inclined to fight with both the brothers. On joining the ladies, Reginald also stood fearlessly in his path, by pertinaciously affixing himself to the side of Lady Agnes during the remainder of the evening, for no one could render himself more agreeable to ladies. He possessed also a good voice and ear for music, which Sir

Digby did not ; and to tell the truth, Lady Agnes preferred the attentions of Reginald that evening to those of the Irish baronet. He had always been a favourite with her, and she was just the person to suit him as a wife, being light-hearted, high-spirited, and without sentimentality. Reginald disliked sentiment in man or woman ; it was, in his opinion, either pedantry or hypocrisy. He did not subscribe to the doctrine of a highly-talented and poetical novelist, " that love in woman is a sentiment." We must make allowance for a little stretch of poetical fancy, and although differing entirely with Reginald Knightley's ideas, we cannot quite admit that the love of woman is merely a sentiment, although with those of pure and chaste ideas, it undoubtedly is so ; yet I fear this feeling must be taken rather as the exception than the common rule.


With regard to Lady Agnes, Reginald saw clearly before him certain insurmountable obstacles. One was the Earl's great partiality for his brother. He would have

also his own father as well as hers opposed to him. Taking these things into consideration, Reginald saw no prospect, at present, of his obtaining the hand of Lady Agnes; but no one could prevent him flirting with her, and paying her the greatest attentions. It gratified him to do so, and to observe that they were so well received; and when Edmund was present he experienced great satisfaction by show- before others the preference she evinced for his society. Although unable to obtain her himself, he was resolved to frustrate the intentions of others, and the Irish baronet, from his attentions to her on the night of the ball, had now increased his animosity.

Mr. Chetwynd, a relative of the Marchioness, of whom we before made mention as greatly taken with Edith Maxwell at the ball, was then staying in the house, rather as her guest than her lord's, since with the Marquis he had little community of taste or ideas. Mr. Chetwynd was neither a fox-hunter, card-player, racing man, nor

gambler ; but having spent several years in North America, and passed much of his time amongst the Indians, accompanying them to their hunting grounds, he was a superior marksman with rifle or gun. He had now reached his fortieth year, being still a bachelor, although the possessor of large property, and a fine old place a few miles distant from Dunkerton House."

At an early age, immediately after finishing his university education, he had formed a strong attachment for a young lady of great personal attractions, to whom he was engaged to be married, when she was seized with a severe pulmonary attack, which terminated in her death, on the day fixed for their marriage. Overwhelmed with grief for the loss of one on whom his fondest love had been fixed, Chetwynd became a wanderer in foreign lands for several years, until he had travelled over the greatest part of the habitable globe ; but having now reached the age considered the turning point of human life, he deemed it a duty he owed to the country of his birth, to spend



the remainder of his days there; and accordingly the family mansion, hitherto occupied by the old housekeeper and butler, man and wife, was prepared for his reception about a month previous to the ball, to which, from the Earl's acquaintance with himself and his father before he left England, he had been invited.

In bodily frame Chetwynd was well adapted to the laborious and hazardous life he had led, being tall and well-proportioned, with fine intellectual features, which on certain occasions exhibited great resolution and sternness of character; but this was scarcely perceptible, in ladies' society to whom he possessed the power of rendering himself most agreeable, irrespective of personal recommendations; for his black curly hair still retained the unmixed hue and luxuriance of youth, and his face, although bronzed by warmer climes, presented the full development and perfection of matured manly beauty.

Since the ball, Chetwynd had dwelt unceasingly upon the loveliness of Edith

Maxwell, his admiration being increased by the high opinion expressed by the Marchioness of her much greater loveliness of disposition, and his attentions were almost exclusively devoted to her during this evening; she also became deeply interested in the recital of his various adventures.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE day following, Chetwynd rode over to Woodborough Park, and being invited by the Earl to take luncheon with them, remained there several hours. The afternoon turning out stormy, he joined Lady Agnes and Edith in the library, where they were amusing themselves with their pencils and paint-brushes, the former copying a landscape with Tyrolese scenery.

“With your permission, Lady Agnes,” Chetwynd said, “I think I could impart a little more life and spirit to your sketch, by the insertion of a Tyrolese huntsman in that blank space beneath the over-hanging rock.”

“Oh, pray do!” she said, offering him the pencil, “for I think with you, it would be a great improvement to the scene.”

Chetwynd sat down to his task, which he executed in a few minutes, much to the surprise and admiration of his two fair lookers-on.

“How beautifully it is done!” exclaimed Lady Agnes, “you are a most superior artist, Mr. Chetwynd; do you paint in oil colours as well?”

“Yes,” was his reply; “and if Lady Agnes would honour me with a sitting, I think I might produce something worthy her notice, although, of course, not equal to the original.”

“You are very kind in offering to take so much trouble, and I think papa would be pleased with my picture.”

“Then with his consent, Lady Agnes, I shall have the greatest pleasure in exerting my humble talents to make it deserving his and your approbation. I am not yet a fox-hunter, although I have joined in the pursuit of buffaloes in the wild prairies of the far West, and in lion and tiger-hunting, both in India and Africa; but now, having returned to my native country, I conclude

it will be deemed imperative upon me to follow the chase of the fox. As, however, my stables cannot yet boast of horses fitted for that purpose, I must in the meantime amuse myself in other ways, and painting from nature being one of my chief pleasures, I can thus beguile the heavy hours of a bachelor, at this most gloomy season of the year."

"You have then, I daresay, a fine collection of original paintings at Dropmore Hall?" Lady Agnes said.

"A large collection of trash, I fear," he replied, "executed by my own hand from sketches taken in my travels of Red Indian warriors, Caffirs, Hottentots, Arabs, Turks and Infidels, of nearly every nation under the sun, with their weapons of war and chase. I have also buffalo hides, tigers' and lions' skins, with those of various other animals and birds—in short my old house looks more like a menagerie than the residence of a country gentleman."

"How charming!" exclaimed Lady Agnes in delight; "I should like so much to see these curiosities!"

“It will afford me the highest gratification to become showman to Lady Agnes and her fair friend, if they will honour me with a call,” was the polite reply.

“Oh! that we will, most certainly,” Lady Agnes said; “and you must come over when you can, to take my likeness for papa.”

“What are you saying of me, my dear?” asked the Earl, who had just entered the room.

“Oh! Papa, Mr. Chetwynd has kindly offered to take my likeness, and you have often said you wished to have it done.”

“Yes, my child, it is very true; but I cannot think of giving Mr. Chetwynd that trouble.”

“You fear, my lord, I should make a caricature instead, I suppose?”

“No, no, Chetwynd, although I remember your taste for that sort of thing when a boy, and my catching you taking a sketch of myself by no means flattering.”

“Ah, yes, my dear lord, I believe I was considered rather a pickle in my youth; but

I will promise you now a faithful portrait of your daughter, after three or four sittings, if you will allow me that honour."

"Well, well, Chetwynd, we will think about it," said the Earl; "I will drive over and pay you a visit, when the weather permits."

"I shall feel proud to receive you, my lord, and show you all the lions and tigers about the place, an account of which I have been giving the ladies."

"Oh! Papa," interposed Lady Agnes, "I long so to see Mr. Chetwynd's curiosities and paintings; pray let us go there to-morrow!"


"I think the ladies will be amused by an inspection of my old curiosity shop."

"Well, if the day is fine, you may expect us about eleven o'clock."

Soon after, Chetwynd having gained his point, returned home in high spirits. He cared little about taking a portrait of Lady Agnes, save as a preliminary step to a nearer acquaintance with Edith Maxwell; and in persuading her to sit for her picture, he hoped for an opportunity of ingra-

tiating himself into the favour of her fair friend.

On entering the old spacious hall of Dropmore the following day, Lady Agnes started back with a cry of surprise and terror, on finding two large buffaloes confronting her, with glaring eyes and shaggy manes, looking like life, standing on either side of the grand staircase, after a nearer approach and closer examination, of which her courteous host directed her attention to other rare specimens of stuffed animals and birds, occupying the entire space on one side of the hall, the other three side walls being ornamented with almost every kind of weapon of defence — spears, buffalo shields, assiegans, bows and arrows, tomahawks, clubs, old-fashioned rifles, and numerous other instruments used by the various nations amongst whom he had sojourned, arranged with great taste, above and around, beautifully painted portraits of their warriors or chief men. The floor of the hall was also nearly covered with tiger, leopard, and lion skins—



as mats at the entrance to each room lay the hides of black and white bears; and above the doors were fixed the antlers and horns of the deer kind, from the huge elk and moose, down to the smallest antelope.

The ladies were occupied with the Earl for more than an hour inspecting the contents of the hall alone, which presented the appearance of a museum on a small scale; but on entering the drawing-room, their eyes were almost dazzled by the splendour of its furniture and fittings, which were more costly than any they had yet beheld. Chairs of the most elaborate and varied workmanship—tables of every description, inlaid with gold and silver—ottomans and settees, covered with the richest and most costly damask, as well as the most beautiful embroidery from Turkey. Vases adorned with precious stones. Screens composed of feathers from birds of the most brilliant plumage—and an abundance of articles of vertu scattered about here and there, with large jars of rare and curious Chinese ma-

nufacture, standing in ~~the~~ four corners of the room, from which the most delightful perfumes were wafted; and yet, with all its luxurious appendages, the apartment presented the appearance of comfort and repose, from the taste with which everything was arranged. Whilst the party were occupied in examining some interesting specimens of Indian mechanism, a black servant entered the room, who with noiseless step approached his master, addressing him in an unknown language, to which a short reply being given in the same tongue, he disappeared. Chetwynd then said: "Now, with your permission, Lady Agnes, we will visit the dining-room, where I hope to prevail on you to take some refreshment." On the door being thrown open, a most elegant luncheon was presented to their view, consisting of various made dishes, pastry, dried fruits, &c., the table being decorated with massive silver wine coolers, containing champagne, hock, and other light wines. To each person was also allotted a drinking cup, of highly polished

buffalo horn, inserted in a stem of chased silver.

“Why, Chetwynd!” exclaimed the Earl, “instead of luncheon you have provided a dinner suited to an Eastern prince!”

“Nothing very particular, my lord; but I thought the ladies would prefer something piquant after their cold drive; and my Indian servant is a good hand with curries and light dishes to suit the ladies’ tastes.”

After the repast was finished, Lady Agnes and Edith expressed their wish to return to the drawing-room, having scarcely examined half the curious things that attracted their attention. Having taken a further survey of them, their host threw open the folding doors leading into the saloon, which requires a more lengthened description, as being the finest room in the mansion — I might say the county, —and of noble dimensions, extending fifty-five feet in length, and forty in width, with height corresponding to its size. The ceiling being arched, was divided into com-

partments, each composed of paintings from some scene in classical or mythological history, — not poor, every-day paintings, but magnificent specimens of art, executed by first-class Italian painters, who had been engaged five years in the completion of their undertaking. The frame, if I may so call it, round each, was of elaborate carved workmanship, painted white and gold. On three sides of the room against the walls stood pilasters, most exquisitely carved in every kind of fruit and flower, which were also white and gold, and the spaces between them filled up with paintings of the same description as the ceiling. On the fourth side were three large windows, which at night were shut from view by superb mirrors, so contrived as to slide into the wall during the day. Each window was draped by curtains of gold-coloured satin damask, from the looms of Lyons, and the effect, when the room was brilliantly lighted up, and reflecting back all its beauties, was something truly magnificent.

The chairs and settees, of the style of Louis XIV., were of white and gold, covered with the same rich material as the curtains; while interspersed about the room were tables of rare marbles, supported on pedestals of white and gold, to match the rest of the furniture. The floor of this unique apartment was composed of inlaid woods, highly polished; but, except when used as a ball-room, covered with one of those luxurious carpets in which the foot sinks as into moss. At the end of this room, opposite the folding doors leading into the drawing-room, were large double ones of plate-glass, through which you entered into the conservatory, like everything else at Dropmore of great magnitude, and laid out with exquisite taste. There was one broad walk through it, dividing parterres of the choicest flowers, with seats of all kinds; while on each side of the walks, at intervals and in arches over them, supported by light iron trellis work, hung the most beautiful and rare creepers; and suspended from these arches were Chinese

lanterns, which when, lit up, sent a soft and subdued light through this lovely spot, like an Arabian-night scene.

Great was the admiration expressed by all, mingled with regrets at not being able to devote more time to all these varied and beautiful things.

After passing through the library, they were conducted into Mr. Chetwynd's studio, around which sketches and half-finished paintings were suspended, and facing his easy chair a blank piece of canvas already prepared, which attracting the attention of Lady Agnes, she asked for what it was intended.

"If you will do me the honour of taking a seat in this chair," placing one for her in a favourable light, "the canvas itself shall give you an answer," he replied, with a smile; and thus taken by surprise, the Earl found himself in a few minutes looking intently and eagerly on the canvas, which was receiving the first outlines of his daughter's features. Chetwynd sat carelessly with his palette in hand, telling

stories and relating adventures the while, so that an hour had passed for Lady Agnes' first sitting, before the Earl became at all aware of the lapse of time.

"I will not detain you any longer now," Mr. Chetwynd said, addressing Lady Agnes, and laying aside his brush; "the light is not so good as I could wish."

"Which reminds me," said the Earl, "that it is high time we took our leave."

"I hope then, my lord, you will allow the young ladies to resume their inspection of the other parts of my Noah's ark on the next fine day; and I think they will be more pleased with the contents of the conservatory, which they have not had time to examine to-day, than anything they have yet seen."

"Well, Chetwynd, I believe it would be of little use my putting a veto on your proposition, or an end to their curiosity, until they have seen all. If not otherwise engaged, I hope you will dine with us to-morrow?"

The invitation being accepted, and the

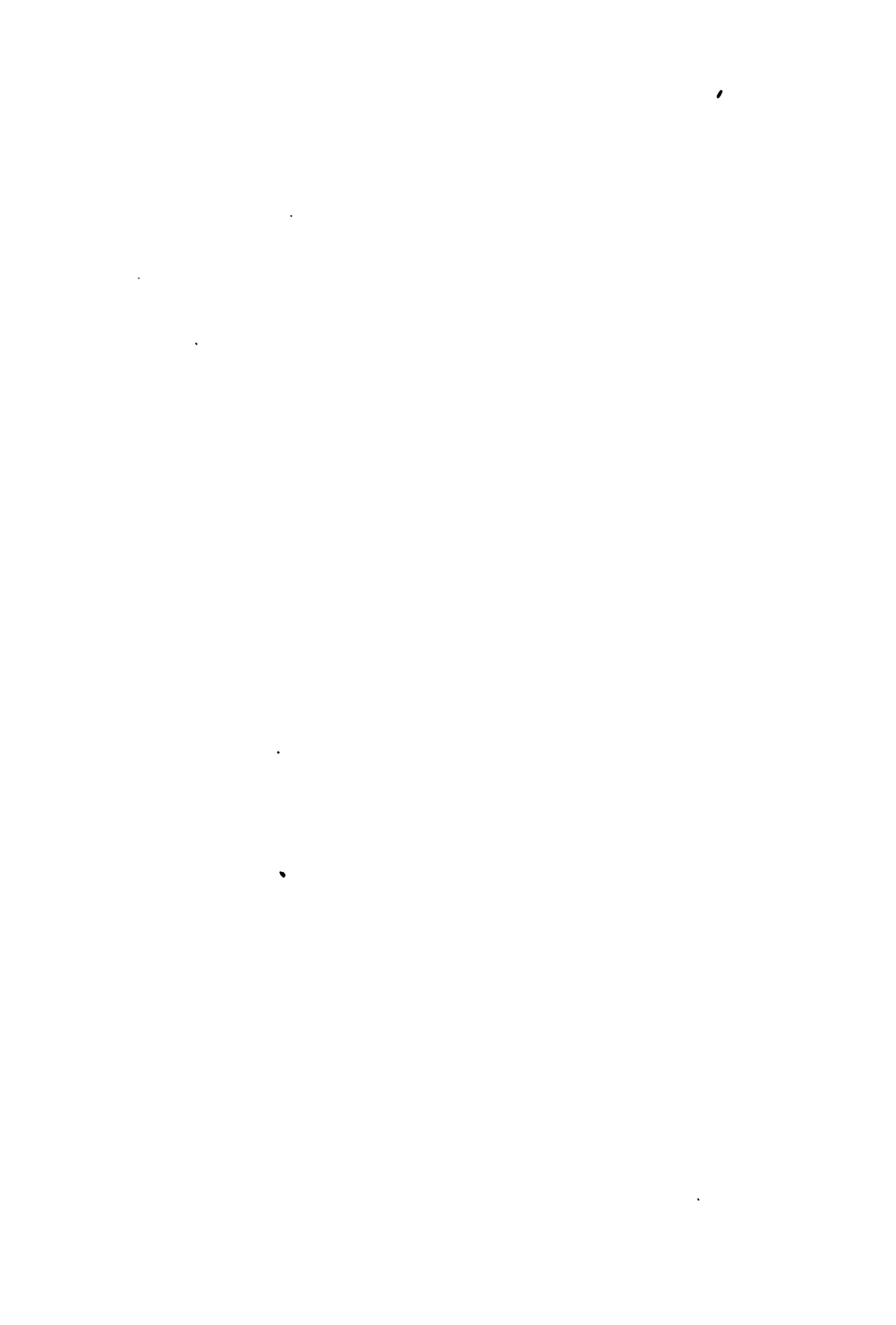
carriage at the door, the Earl took leave of his entertaining host, Lady Agnes expressing rapturous delight with the curiosities of the place, which had excited her highest admiration.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

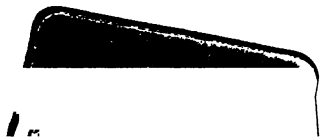
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